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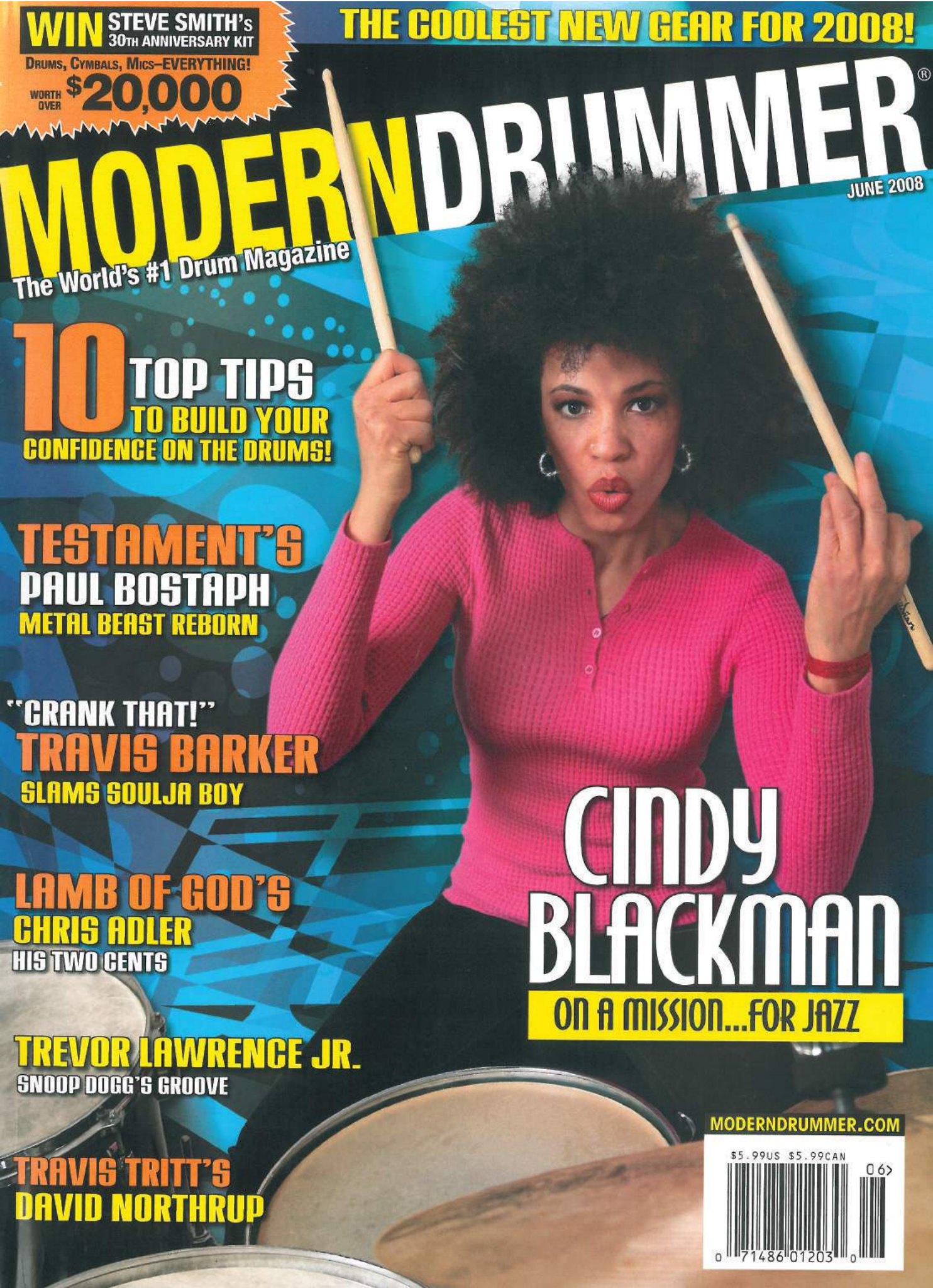

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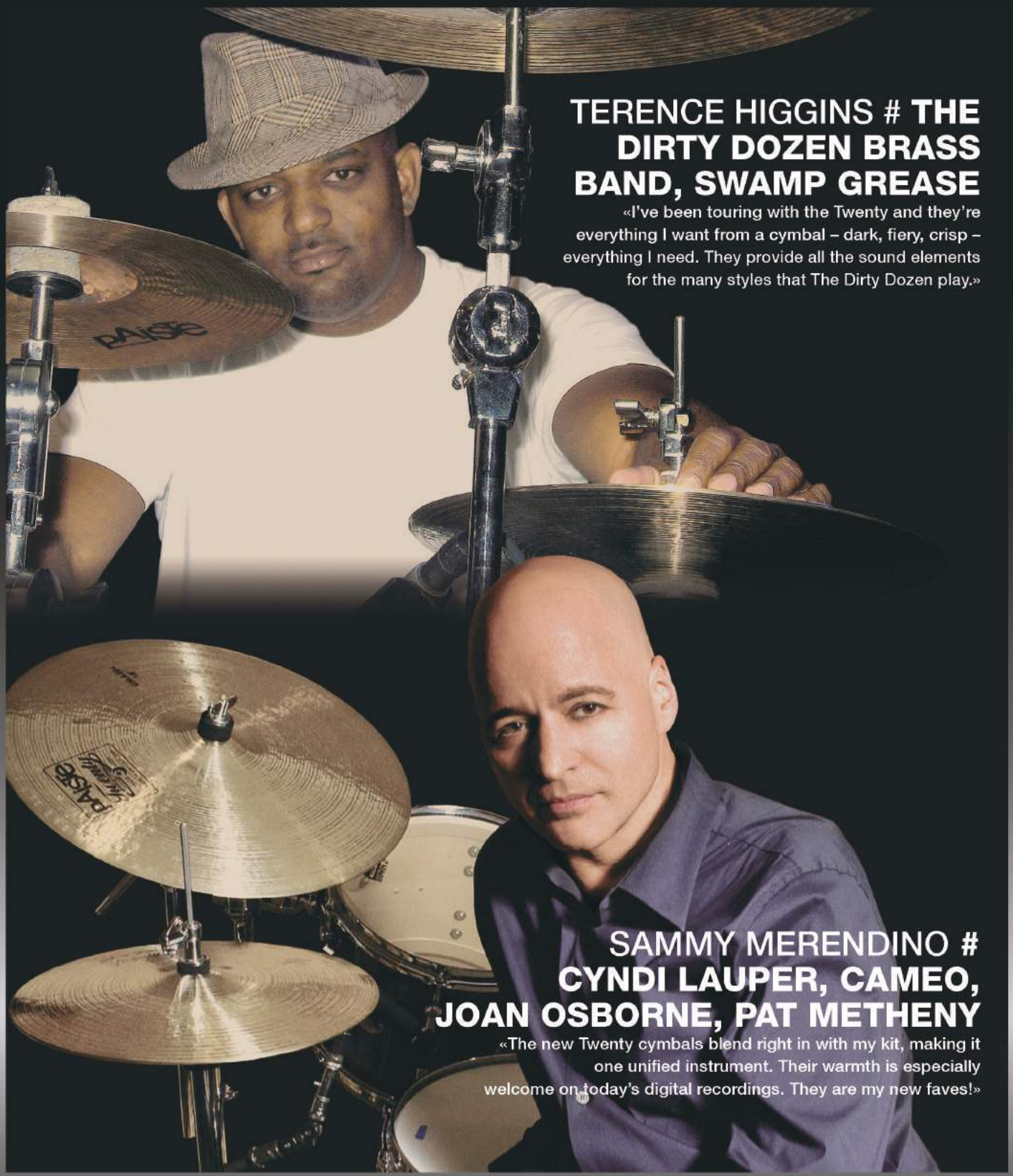

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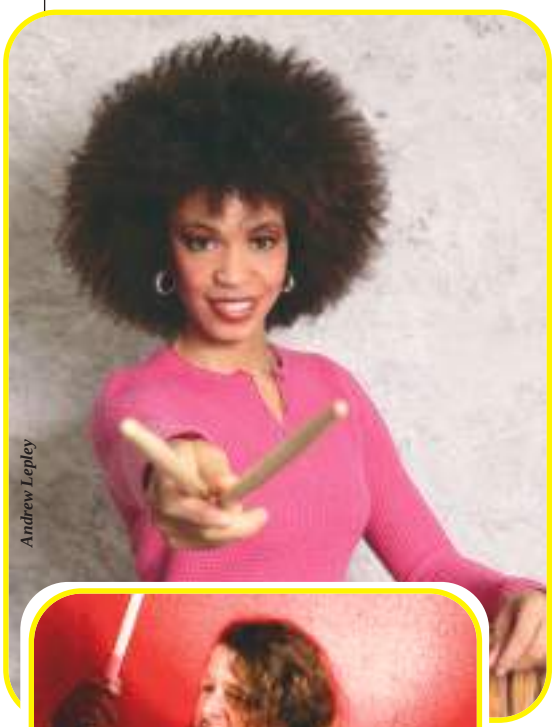
Volume 32, Number 6



Andrew Lepley

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WIN! WIN! WIN!

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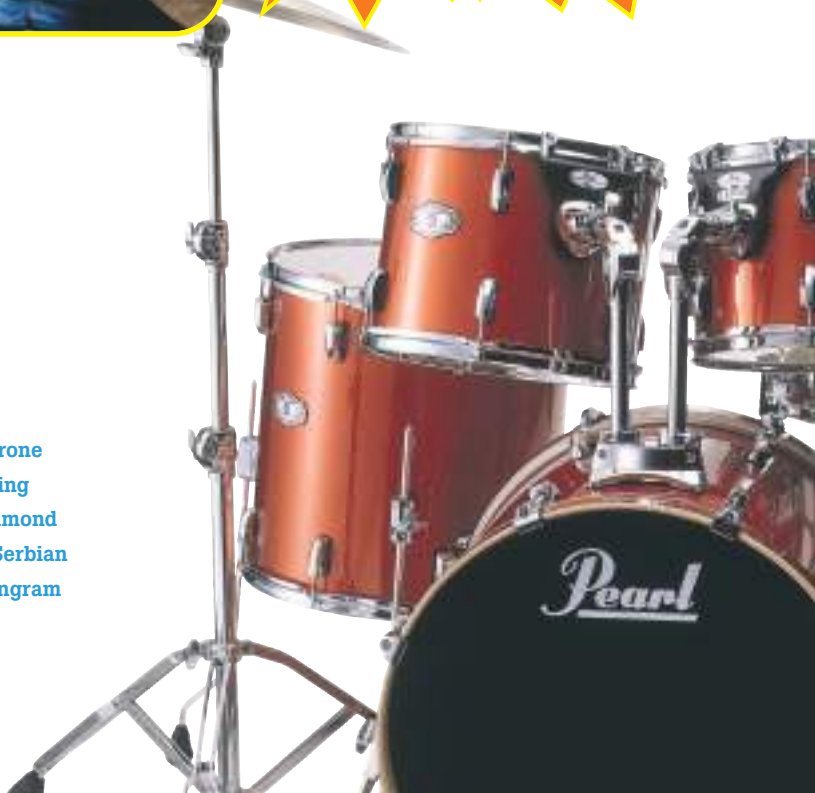

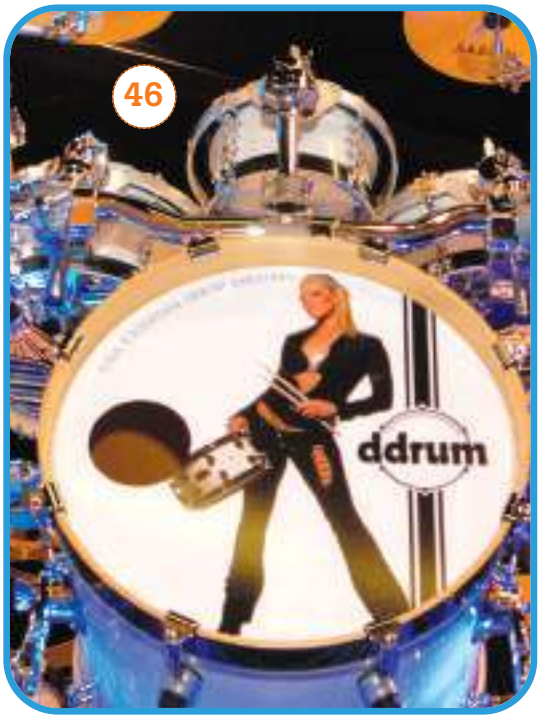

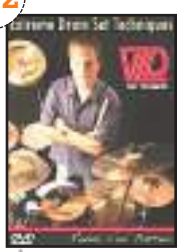

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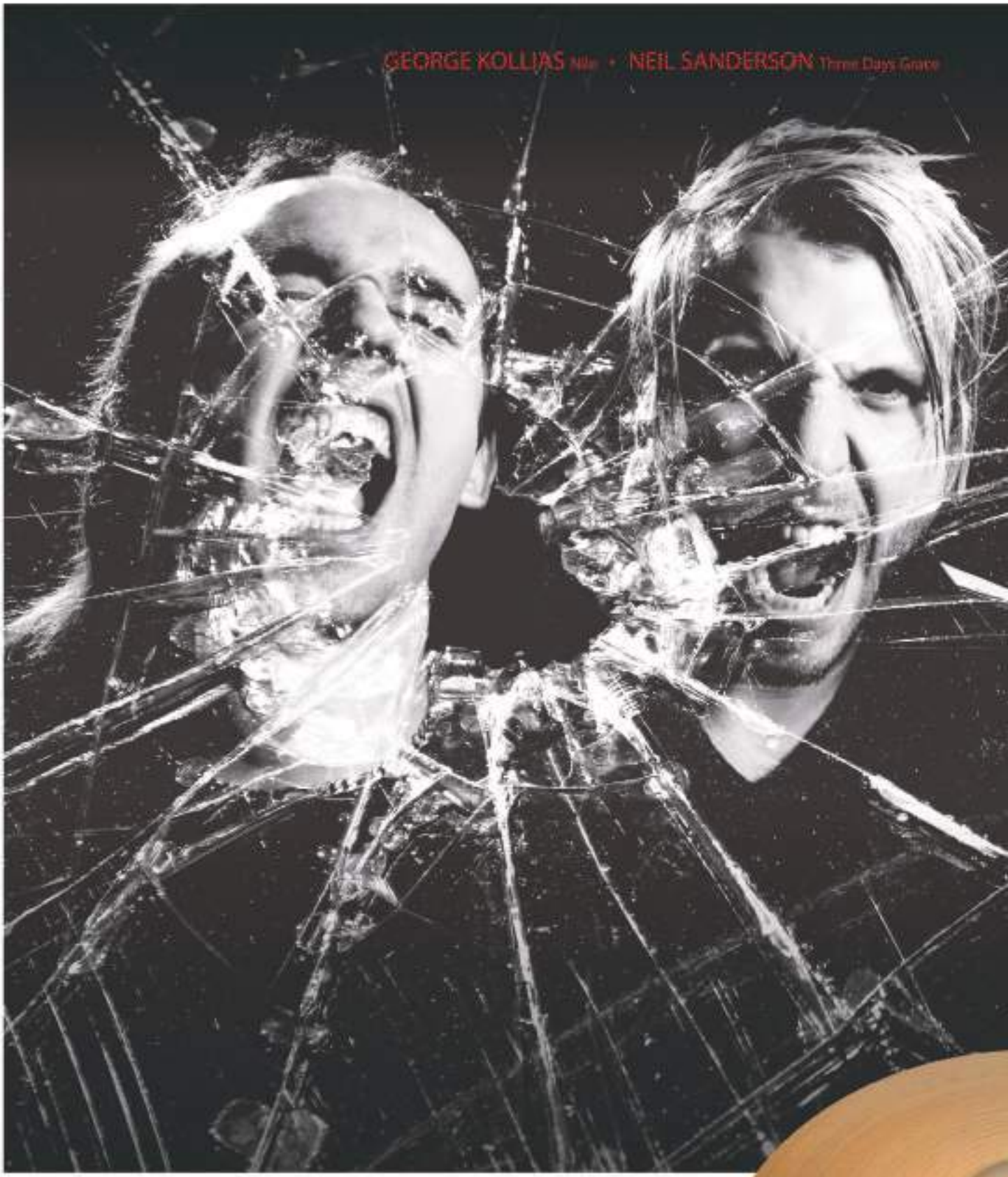

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

MD Fest Returns!

Just in case you missed the ad in last month' s issue and haven' t yet seen the one in this month' s (see page 74), we' re very happy to announce that tickets for the 2008 Modern Drummer Festival Weekend—the world' s oldest and most prestigious drumming event—are on sale now. As you read this, the *MD* staff is hard at work putting together this year' s roster of top drumming stars.

The Festival will be held Saturday and Sunday, September 20 and 21. In exciting news, we' re moving to a new venue. A year-long search has led us to what we feel will be our new home for years to come: the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College, State University Of New York (SUNY).

This beautiful venue is located just outside the city of White Plains, New York (about thirty miles north of New York City). The college campus is nestled in a rural setting—but only two miles off a major interstate highway, offering easy access. And there' s lots of parking immediately adjacent to the Performing Arts Center complex. Long-distance travelers can utilize La Guardia, JFK, or Newark airports, as well as the even closer Westchester County regional airport, which is served by several US domestic carriers.

The Concert Hall in which the Festival will be held is beautifully appointed, and in that way is reminiscent of our previous venue, NJPAC. But it offers more of the intimacy that veteran Festival-goers remember fondly from our original venue at Montclair State University—while still allowing us to accommodate everyone who wants to attend the show. We think you' ll find it to be the best of both worlds.

We' ll be announcing the artists who' ll be appearing at the show in upcoming ads in *MD* and on www.moderndrummer.com. But savvy Festival-goers know that the show tends to sell out early, so it' s a good idea to get tickets soon to guarantee your choice of seats. (Tickets may be ordered by phone at [914] 251-6200, or online at www.artscenter.org.)

We' re looking forward to once again presenting the drumming community' s biggest event—and to seeing you there!

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Volume 32 Number 6

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Alex Van Halen

Alex Van Halen is to drums what Edward Van Halen is to guitar. He has been and always will be a huge influence on me. I sincerely thank Modern Drummer for the outstanding feature on this truly innovative and legendary musician.

John Arterberry

Aside from powering one of rock' s greatest bands for so many years, Alex Van Halen also holds the distinction of having one of the most readily identifiable drum sounds in rock (or any music, for that matter). In this era of sampled sounds and carefully contrived sameness, that' s a major accomplishment much to be admired.

Paul Waaltenal

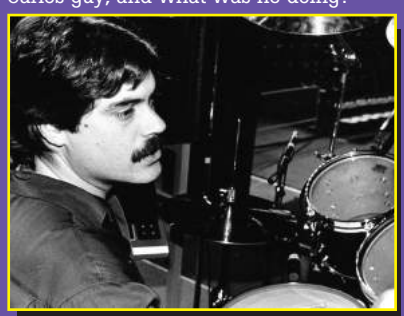
Alex González

Finally, a drumming magazine has recognized the amazing talent of Maná' s super drummer, Alex González. The band is one of the biggest things in the Spanish-speaking world, and they' ve begun to enjoy massive crossover success in the US market. A lot of that is due to Alex' s drumming and vocal abilities, and to his dynamic showmanship. Viva Alex!

Ron Vasquez

Remembering Carlos Vega

Years ago, my mother sent me the James Taylor Live album. I liked James well enough, but as a drummer, I was focused on funk, fusion, and jazz. So when my mother called to tell me she was sending the CD, well, that' s what moms do, like sending you socks. Was I in for a surprise. That band! That drummer! Who was this Carlos guy, and what was he doing?



I' ve listened to that CD over and over again for years, and Carlos' s playing always makes me smile. So I was thrilled to see your transcriptions of Carlos' s drumming on that album, and I look forward to woodshedding them. Thanks for skimming off some cream and sharing it with the drum community. Just goes to show, mothers really do know best!

Ed Stalling

Congratulations on Eric Novod' s excellent article saluting the great Carlos Vega. In addition to the James Taylor album cited, two excellent videos featuring Carlos are GRP Live In Session (with Dave Grusin, Lee Ritenour, Dianne Schuur, Larry Williams, and Abe Laboriel Sr.) and James Taylor' s Squibnocket. Stunning performances by all.

John Rogers

MD Mag & Wire Fan

I thought you might enjoy a photo that illustrates my love for your magazine—an affair that' s lasted for over twenty years. (This shot was taken four years ago.)

I also love the new MD Wire e-newsletter. I read it from top to bottom; it doesn' t leave my inbox until I' ve exhausted every bit of it. Great stuff. You guys at MD really are a peck of cool dudes and dudettes.

Michael P. Barton

Driving & Drumming

I' ve been a drummer for twenty-five years, but I recently had a first-time experience: I got pulled over by the police for drumming on my steering wheel.

I was on my way home, listening to some music and drumming along as I always do, when I felt the car drift off a little to the right. I corrected the steering...and not half a mile down the road I was pulled over. The officer said he stopped me because I went over the shoulder line and back again, and asked if I could explain myself. I told him that I was a drummer and had been tapping on the wheel when I felt the drift and made the correction. He didn' t ask if I' d been drinking (which I hadn' t). After he took my information, he gave me a written warning for " careless driving." I can understand pulling a person over if you think they' re drunk, but since when did practicing drums in one' s car warrant a written warning?

Just a tip to all my fellow drummers out there: The law is watching.

David Sunshine

The Art Of Brush Playing

Congratulations on your February ' 08 feature on " The Art Of Brush Playing." I agree with every word from those great masters. Brush technique is highly individual and stylized. When one thing works great for one player, the exact opposite might work perfectly for someone else. Thanks for even thinking of doing an article on brushes. Bravo!

Butch Miles

DROPPED BEAT

The photo credit was accidentally omitted from the shot of Bernard Purdie on page 122 of the April '08 *MD*. The shot was taken by Rodney Harrison.

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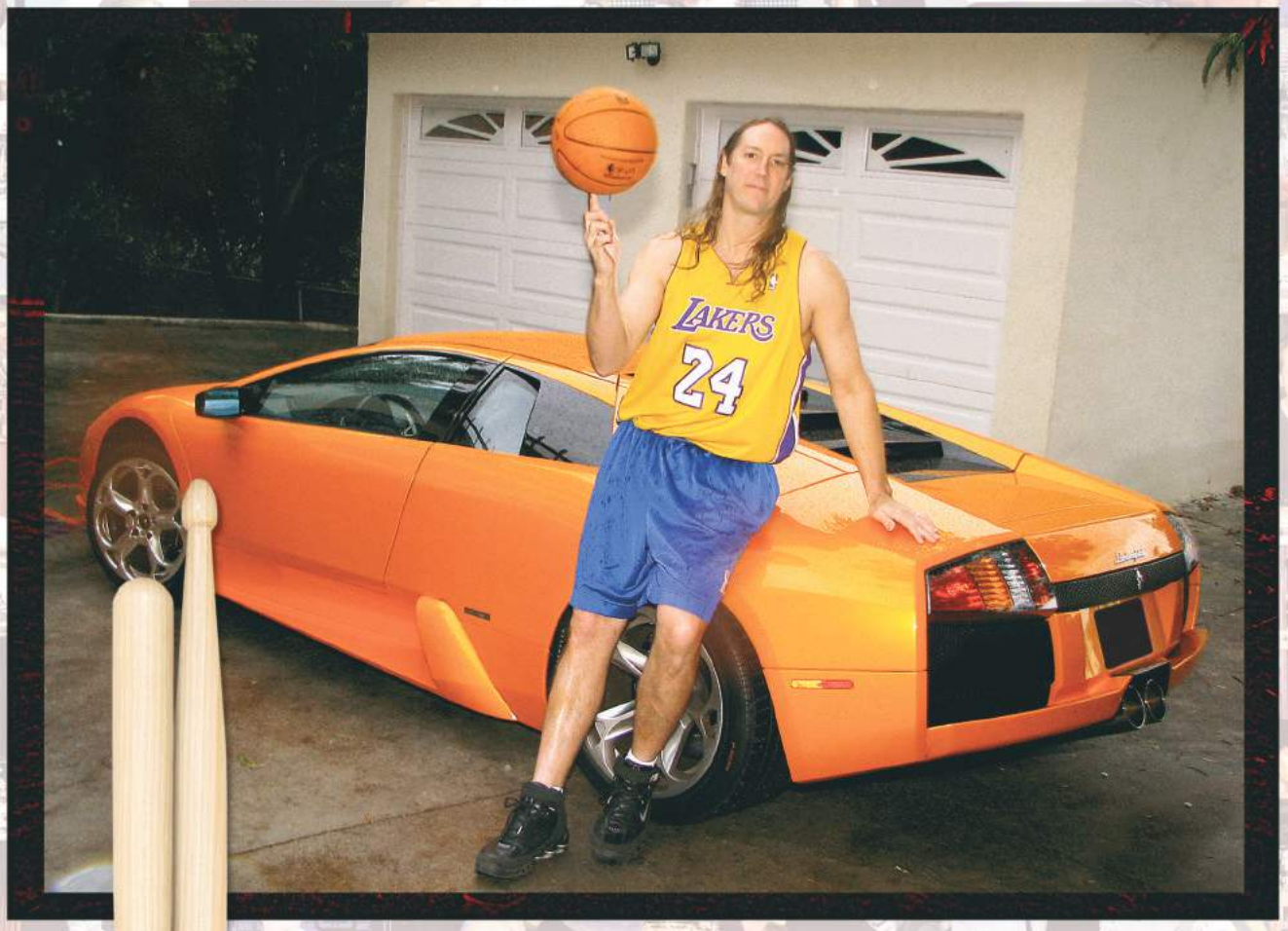

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Rob Shanahan

Session Ace

Randy Cooke

On Artists, Cymbals, And Practicing

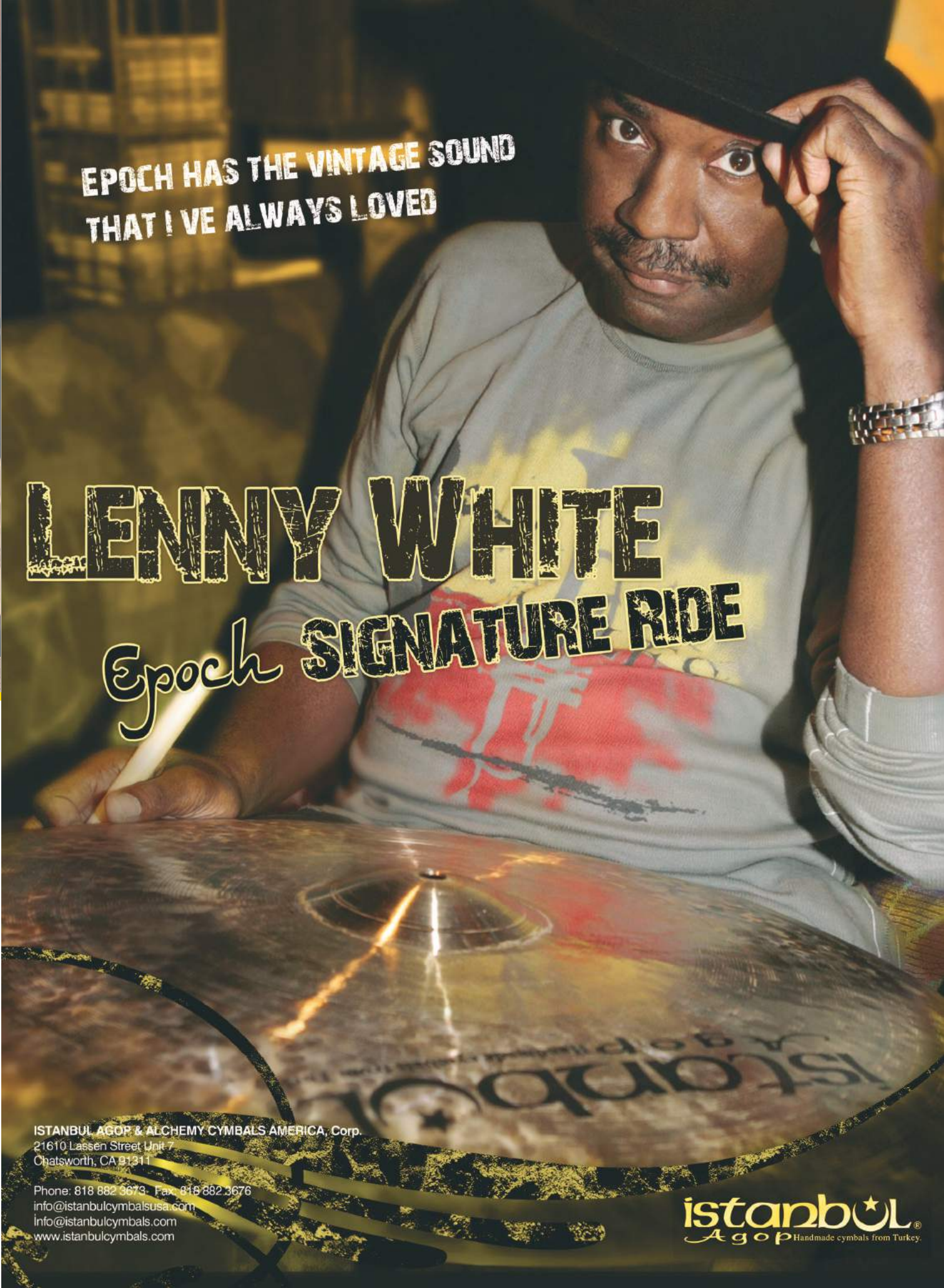
You are my favorite drummer, partly because we're both Canadian-born, but mainly because of your great playing on so many projects. I have three questions for you. 1) What artists have you always wanted to work with? 2) What is your current cymbal setup? 3) What are your practice routines when on and off the road?
Dolore Lirette

Thanks for your kind words; they're much appreciated. Let me answer your questions in order.

1) In true drummer fashion, I have to say "all of them," because there are definitely far too many to mention. However, having just worked with Ringo Starr and Dave Stewart, I will say it would be wonderful to work with Paul McCartney.

2) My cymbal setup changes every time I do a session, live gig, or tour. I'm a proud Zildjian endorser, and my current setup at home in my studio is, from left to right, 14" A Quickbeat hi-hats, a 17" A thin crash, a 20" K heavy ride, an 18" K Custom Session series crash, and my favorite secret weapon: a 20" Sound Effects series Oriental Crash Of Doom.

3) Practice...well, now the guilt is starting to set in. When my discipline does kick into action, I try to challenge myself musically and physically by doing assorted Latin or jazz exercises. There's nothing like a little five-way coordination to drive you nuts when you're trying to relax at home. On the road, the only feasible thing to practice is your hand technique. I'm constantly doing rudimental stuff on a pad whenever and wherever I can. I've always felt that if you keep those tools sharp, even if you can't get on a kit, you're staying ahead of the game.



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Omar Hakim's "Listen Up"

I recently watched a high-definition DVD sampler that featured a song that you performed called "Listen Up." Is this song available anywhere on CD/MP3/DVD? Google and Yahoo searches don't seem to turn up much other than other people looking for the same thing. Can you shed some light on this for me?
Adam Kane

Hi Adam, and thanks for your interest in my music. The song "Listen Up" was originally recorded as a part of an HD video project for DTS (Digital Theater Systems), to introduce their encoding software for high-resolution 96k/24bit 7.1 surround audio. The project was specifically targeted for the Blu-ray and HD-DVD launch at the CES Show in 2006. Video for the song was captured in HD, and the audio was recorded as a "live" 7.1 surround performance. That video clip has become a part of quite a few HD sampler DVDs (in both HD formats) over the last eighteen months.

Over the past two years—in between my busy touring and clinic schedule—I've been working on a new CD that will include the "Listen Up" track. I'm in the process of putting finishing touches on the project, which is titled We Are One. I'm hoping to release it soon. I hope you enjoy it. Thanks again for your inquiry.

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QUICK BEATS

Asia's
Carl Palmer

Text and photos by Joe Perry

Place of birth: Handworth-Wood, England
Hobbies/interests: Fencing, swimming
How I relax: Reading, visiting the beach
Favorite album:
Live At Carnegie Hall by The Dave Brubeck Quartet
Vehicle I drive: Porsche convertible
Other instruments I play: Percussion, guitar, piano
Place I'd like to visit: My bank manager's office
I wish I'd played drums on:
"Hound Dog" by Elvis Presley
Past musicians I'd like to have worked with:
Miles Davis, Elvis Presley, Oscar Peterson
Current musician I'd like to work with: Steve Winwood
Person I would like to talk to: Winston Churchill
Person I admire: My girlfriend, Katie
Most prized possession: My family
Most memorable performance: Montreal, Canada, in 1977, with ELP and a sixty-four-piece orchestra
Most embarrassing moment on stage: Champagne, Illinois, in 1977, with ELP. I fell through the stage as it was opening and broke a rib.
Most unusual venue played: Under a motor speedway overpass in Albany, New York in 2007
Largest venue played: The California Jam in Ontario, California in 1974, for 200,000 people
Most unusual item autographed: A young lady's behind

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Deborah Arlook

Steve FERRONE

A Memorable Superbowl Performance

Drumming great Steve Ferrone is *always* busy. One particularly fun project he recently completed was a live recording called *Soul Summit*. It featured such musical luminaries as Bob Babbitt, Karl Denson, Richard Elliot, Mike Mattison, Jason Miles, Susan Tedeschi, Reggie Young, and Maysa. "It's always fun to play with seasoned musicians," Ferrone says. "Jason Miles sent us CDs of the songs we were going to do, and then we had two days of rehearsals. All of us are used to doing things like this."

"Shotgun" sticks out in Ferrone's mind as one of his favorite cuts from the album. "It zipped along pretty well," he laughs. "It had quite a bit of power when we did it. I was panting at the end." Of course, Ferrone has done quite a bit of live recording in his past, including classic records with Brian Auger, Average White Band, and Eric Clapton. "I've been fortunate," Steve admits. "I've always played with really great musicians, where the object was to go out and *perform*. I don't think about the recording or the audience. I just think about playing good time, and somehow that translates into the music. I think over the years I've learned what doesn't sound good in a situation, whether it be in the studio or live."

As for Ferrone's main gig, there's a new Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers album in the works. After fifteen years, Ferrone insists he still loves working with Petty. "It's a great band," he says. "It's not an old-time band that goes out there and goes through the motions. Tom really enjoys playing, and it's always an adventure. You never know what he's going to pull out or how he's going to go about something. I think it's one of the greatest rock 'n' roll bands out there."

And what was it like performing at the Superbowl this past February? "That was a pretty intense experience," Steve says, wide-eyed. "The week leading up to it, all I heard was that there was going to be a billion people watching—a *billion*. I don't usually let that stuff get to me, but I did get butterflies in my stomach a little on that one. So I did a little meditation beforehand and talked to my recently deceased mother in my mind—I found it very calming just thinking about her.

"Standing on the sidelines," he continues, "waiting to go on, I looked at that huge, energy riddled, pumped-up crowd, watching the football players do battle a few yards away from where I was standing. After the half-time whistle, I watched the crew as they assembled that huge stage and production in about three minutes without a hitch. 'Let's go!' someone yelled, and we walked across the field and up onto the stage. As I was getting myself ready, I looked up and saw Tom. I know he was feeling the pressure. So I simply said, 'This is going to be *fun*, so have fun with it!' He smiled and said, 'You're right!' There was a quick fist bump from Mike Campbell, and it was time to count 'em off. It was the most fun-filled, explosive twelve minutes I've ever had with my clothes on.

"I'm privileged to have been able to experience playing for that many people all over the world at once," Steve says. "And to have been able to do it with my beloved TP & The HBs was the icing on the proverbial cake."

Robyn Flans

Mute Math' s Darren KING
Freedom To Fail

You'd never know it by listening to Mute Math's terrific debut album, but drummer Darren King got his act together not by playing his best, but by playing his *worst*. In between demoing songs for the band's forthcoming album in a farmhouse in Franklin, Tennessee, the twenty-five-year New Orleans resident explained his unusual methods.

"Growing up," King recalls, "I played in church and was free to be horrible on the drums. The things I learned came from playing lots of bad shows. The pressures of playing live—there are things you otherwise would never confront. You can practice all you want, but you have to play lots of bad shows first. The more bad notes, the quicker you'll get to the good ones. That's my theory.

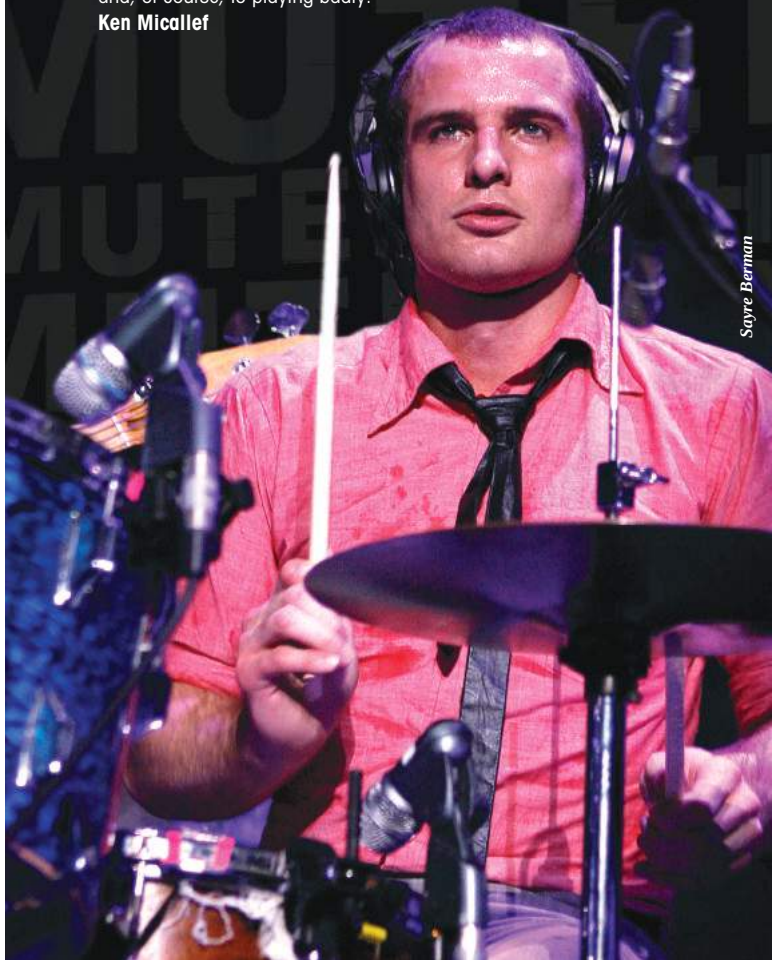
"My favorite song of all time," he continues, "was Gene Krupa's 'Sing Sing Sing.' I played it on basketballs aired out to different pitches. I studied rudiments briefly, the rest of the time was spent watching drummers at church and playing to CDs by Gene Krupa, Weezer, and The Cranberries."

King's galvanic, deeply improvisational drumming sounds like the result of a New Orleans groove fascination and an intense rudimental regimen. But like the best things in life, it's really just an accident. Similarly, King's practice sessions follow a freeform approach.

"Whenever I find something that I can't do," he says, "something that my brain wants to do, that's when I slow it down and work it out. But because we've toured for two years straight, whenever I have the opportunity to play, I enjoy playing freeform. I will imagine myself in front of a crowd and I'll just play, messing with ideas for the songs we're writing, and focusing on creative beats."

Demoing tracks on a found-sound set of buckets, saw blades, or even pots and pans, King will record Mute Math's second studio album with his equally unique kit consisting of late-'60s Rogers drums augmented by a 1940s Ludwig WFL snare and a '60s-era Slingerland marching bass drum. Whatever the outcome, King credits his success to playing live—and, of course, to playing badly.

Ken Micallef



Sayre Berman

Mark Inseta

Billy DRUMMOND
Swing, Style, And Substance

As a leader, Billy Drummond has recorded three albums that exemplify his past-meets-future approach, a style marked by an allegiance to yesterday's jazz masters, but with a forward-thinking bent. *The Gift, Dubai,* and *Native Colours* show Drummond to be an inspired soloist and a timekeeper whose main focus, like all great jazz players, is his ride cymbal.

"The first thing that goes for me when I haven't been playing for a while is my touch, my sound," Drummond admits. "If my cymbal beat doesn't feel right, then it all feels wrong. So I work on just playing the ride cymbal at every tempo, at every volume, and away from the drums. Playing the ride cymbal is an art unto itself."

In addition to work with Sonny Rollins, Joe Lovano, and Archie Shepp, Drummond's latest recordings include Carla Bley's *Find Paolo Fresu,* Steve Kuhn's *Pastoral,* and Larry Willis's *Blue Fable.* Drummond can burn a straight-ahead gig, but he also attracts esoteric bandleaders like Bley.

"Carla writes through-composed music," Drummond reports, "which requires reading eight-page charts that need a different mindset than just counting things off. She knows what she wants, and within that I have to be able to inject my personality."

Currently an adjunct jazz drum professor at The Juilliard School and New York University, Drummond values his sound as the primary substance of his style.

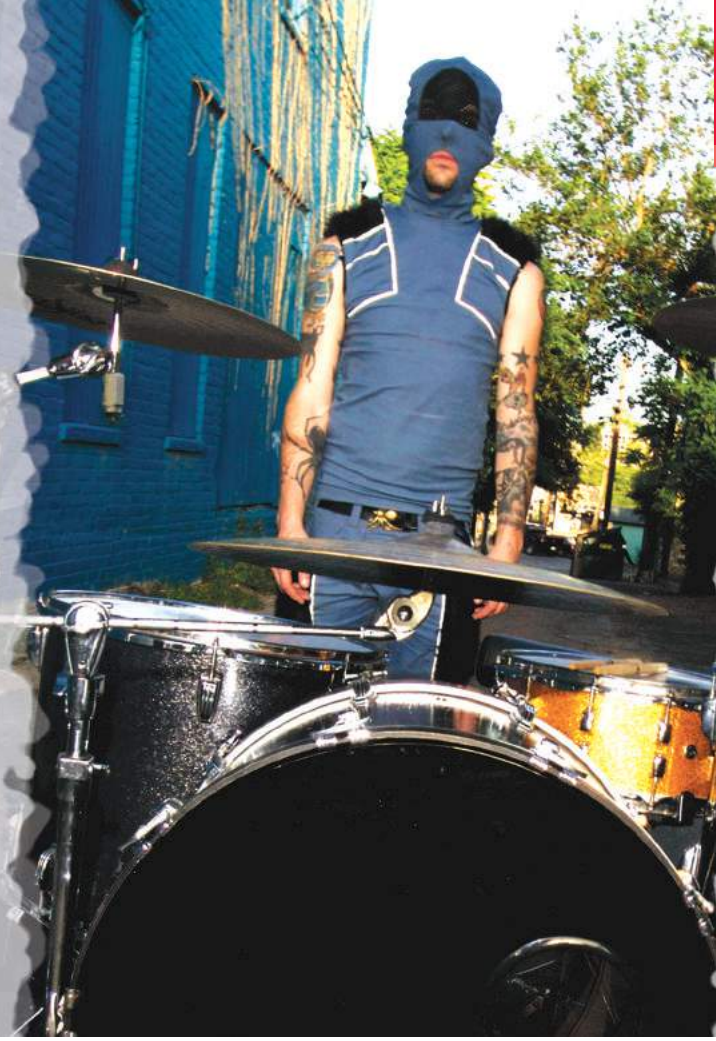
"I once sat in the drum booth while Billy Higgins was recording," Drummond recalls. "It wasn't like he was playing loud or hitting the drums hard, but the sound was real full. Louis Hayes' sound on the drums is special too. He influenced Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. There aren't too many guys left from that period. Nobody plays a ride cymbal like Louis Hayes.

"A sound comes with experience and listening to as many drummers as you can," Billy adds. "You imitate, emulate, and after so many years you become an amalgamation of all those people you have absorbed, plus yourself. You are what you eat."

Ken Micallef

The Locust's Gabriel Serbian

Super-Speed Itch



After over a decade of service as a rapid-fire hardcore punk outfit, The Locust has finally written its ultimate opus—well, relatively speaking. Last year's *New Erections* is the longest album the band has released, and features some of their most involved songwriting. The heady effort clocks in at just over twenty minutes over eleven tracks. That might not seem like much on paper—but in practice, it's a whole 'nother beast.

Pummeling this high-speed affair with super-human dexterity is drummer Gabriel Serbian. The drummer's blistering attentiveness fuses the incredibly intricate performances together on stage—and all the while he's wearing a mask that covers most of his face. But before these songs even reach audiences' ears, there are songwriting and recording sessions to tackle.

"It usually takes a very long time for us to write a song," Serbian admits. "Even when the songs were under a minute, it would take a tremendous amount of time for us to be satisfied with them and consider them completed. We'll work out different movements and then we'll figure out how to tie them together."

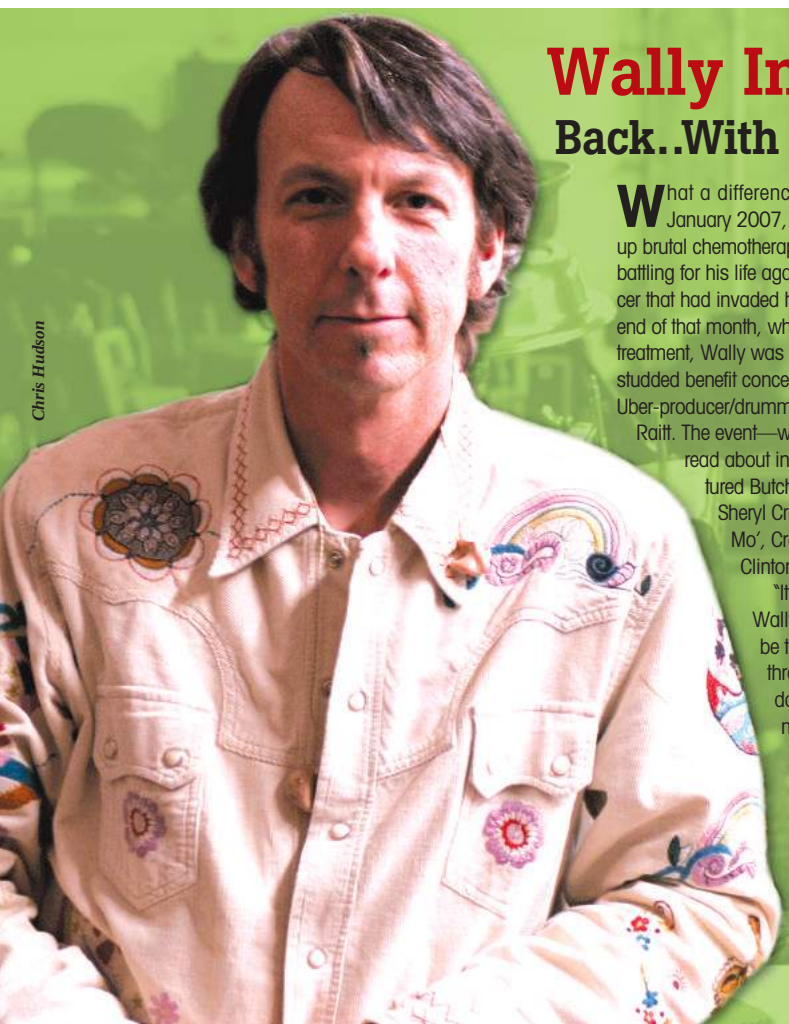
Where Serbian especially gains attention is on stage. The set list is orchestrated around Serbian's drumming (which is accomplished via an alarmingly simple four-piece Ludwig kit), something that he takes very seriously, both on the road and off.

"After the first week on the road, I'm locked in, because I'm playing every night," he says. "When I'm not playing, I ride my bike more, staying active. I even started lifting weights a little bit, and it's pretty rad because I noticed that I have a lot more stamina than I used to."

So what gave Serbian the itch to slam with blazing speed? "I just did it—I never had a plan on how to play like I play," he says. "It's just what came natural to me, and I think it just evolved. I don't sit down and try to figure out something that I've never played before. It just naturally evolves."

Videos of Gabe Serbian's performances with The Locust can be viewed at www.mydrumlesson.com.

Waleed Rashidi



Chris Hudson

Wally Ingram

Back..With A Little Help From His Friends

What a difference a year can make. In January 2007, Wally Ingram was finishing up brutal chemotherapy and radiation treatments, battling for his life against the squamous cell cancer that had invaded his throat and neck. At the end of that month, while awaiting the results of his treatment, Wally was able to participate in a star-studded benefit concert in his honor, organized by Uber-producer/drummer Butch Vig and Bonnie Raitt. The event—which *MD* readers initially read about in the June 2007 issue—featured Butch's band Garbage, Raitt, Sheryl Crow, Jackson Browne, Keb' Mo', Crowded House, George Clinton, and many others.

"It was a powerful night," Wally reflects. "The incentive to be there and play got me through some really tough days. The event itself was magical. The outpouring of love from the artists and the audience was overwhelming. It put wind in my sails to fight on." In June, Wally learned that he is cancer-free, with a clean bill of health.

Wally began 2008 back on the road for a short tour with Stockholm Syndrome, a band including members of Widespread Panic and Gov't Mule. The New Year also marked his return to Sheryl Crow's band, now as percussionist. Through the mid-'90s, Wally drummed for Sheryl's first band as she ascended to fame. Sheryl, a cancer survivor herself, literally took the Ingram family into her Hollywood home so Wally could be close to Cedars-Sinai for treatment, even bringing him there herself. Wally is also godfather to Sheryl's adopted son, Wyatt.

Wally's endorsing companies are behind him too. DW customized two new Rainbow Twisted VLT kits for both Wally and his two-year-old daughter, Lydia. Pro-Mark recently surprised Wally with a stock of his signature-model stick—playing off the benefit concert's "Beat-It-Wally" theme—now carrying the triumphant proclamation: "Wally Beat It!" And—with a little help from his friends—the sentiment is also available for a limited time on the Ringo Starr model to assist the Ingrams with medical expenses.

Happy to be back in the game, grateful to all, Wally says, "Everyone's support made such a difference, and it's wonderful to be working with Sheryl again. We're family."

David Stanoch

UPDATE **NEWS**

Jeremy Stacey is on Sheryl's Crow's latest CD, *Detours*. He's currently touring with her.

Jose Medeles is on new records by The Breeders (*Mountain Battles*), Joey Santiago (The Pixies), and Holloys, a group featuring three drummers—Medeles, **Jon Theodore** (ex-Mars Volta), and **Brian Brown** (Bluebird). He also has a new solo album coming out soon, *Junkyard Cadences*.

The Fab Faux (with **Rich Pagano** on drums) went into the studio with legendary Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick for a "Master Class" series to be shown at universities around the world, teaching recording techniques and showing how The Beatles achieved their sound. You can watch it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6Kyf9wjZc4.

R&B drummer **Jeffery B. Suttles**' new CD, *Time To Suttledown*, also features **Rafael Padilla** on percussion, among others.

Johnny Dee has been in the studio with Doro, with a tour to follow. Plans are in the works for a 2009 world tour celebrating the band's twenty-fifth anniversary.

Dean Butterworth has joined Good Charlotte and can be heard on their album *Good Morning Revival*. In addition, Dean has recorded with Ben Harper, Morrissey, John Lee Hooker, Nancy Sinatra, Veronica, Goldfinger, The Used, Hilary Duff, Missy Higgins, Colin James, Buckcherry, and The Matches, and will soon be in the studio with Ben Lee. He also played drums on recent Josephine Love Letter and Cute Is What We Aim For albums.

Sonny Emory is working with Bette Midler on her new Las Vegas production, *The Showgirl Must Go On*.

Otis Brown III is doing the VH1 Jazz Masters tour, which features Earl Klugh, Bob James, and Patti Austin.

Flo Mounier will be on tour with Crytopsy to promote their newest release.

Keith Carlock will tour with Steely Dan this summer.

Scott Mercado is in the studio with Candlebox.

Actress Scarlett Johansson will release her debut album, *Anywhere I Lay My Head*, on May 20. The album features ten Tom Waits songs and one original track. Yeah Yeah Yeahs guitarist Nick Zimmer, along with Tall Firs drummer **Ryan Sawyer**, appear on the disc.

Steve Gadd is working on James Taylor's new CD.

Chaun Horton is now playing with Natasha Bedingfield.

Sully Erna gave a Yamaha kit to musician/actor/magician Criss Angel for his birthday. The kit will be in an episode of season four of *Mindfreak*.

Chris McHugh is on tour with Keith Urban. He can be heard on Urban's single "Stupid Boy."

Justin Foley is on tour with Killswitch Engage.

Mike Bordin is on tour with Ozzy Osbourne.

Stacy Jones is on the Hannah Montana tour.

Jimmy Chamberlin is on tour with Smashing Pumpkins.

Kris Myers has been touring with Umphrey's McGee. The Dub Trio, featuring **Joe Tomino**, will join them on select dates.

Dennis Chambers recently toured with Stanley Clarke, in support of his latest release, *Toys Of Men*.

Steve Houghton can be heard on the new Caixa Trio release, *Commissioned Works*.

Congratulations to Broadway drummer **Gary Seligson** and his wife, Lucy, on the birth of their second son, Andrew.

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Shelly Manne was born on 6/11/20. **Chick Webb** passed away 6/16/39, **Yogi Horton** on 6/8/87, **Tito Puente** on 6/1/00, and **Pistol Allen** on 6/31/02.

6/14/29: Drummer **Chick Webb** makes his first recording, *Dog Bottom*, as a bandleader.

6/18/67: Jimi Hendrix (with **Mitch Mitchell**) performs at the Monterey Pop Festival in California.

6/17/06: The Foo Fighters (with **Dave Grohl** and **Taylor Hawkins**) play in front of 85,000 people at London's New Hyde Park. Grohl later claims, "It was the most unbelievable show of my life."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Remo Belli (Remo heads): 6/22/27
Vic Firth (percussionist): 6/2/30
James Gadson (R&B great): 6/17/39
Charlie Watts (The Rolling Stones): 6/2/41
Bernard Purdie (R&B legend): 6/11/41
Mick Fleetwood (Fleetwood Mac): 6/24/42
Ian Paice (Deep Purple): 6/29/48
Frank Beard (ZZ Top): 6/11/49
Joey Kramer (Aerosmith): 6/21/50
Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick): 6/12/51
Peter Erskine (jazz giant): 6/5/54
Doane Perry (Jethro Tull): 6/16/54
Charles Collins (R&B great): 6/21/54
Mickey Curry (Bryan Adams): 6/10/56
Chad Cromwell (sessions): 6/14/57
Zoro (independent): 6/13/62
Steve Shelley (Sonic Youth): 6/23/62
Jimmy Chamberlin (Smashing Pumpkins): 6/10/64
Eric Kretz (Stone Temple Pilots): 6/7/66
Ray Luzier (Korn): 6/14/70

THE HEART AND SOUL OF A DRUMSET

[CHAPTER TWO IN A SERIES: "SNARE DRUM SOUL"]

BY NEIL PEART

PHOTOS BY ROB SHANAHAN

"FOR THIS DRUMMIN' MAN, IT IS A REVELATION, VERGING ON A MIRACLE."

Perhaps my favorite part of my drumming life is the songwriting and pre-production work for a new Rush album. Everything about my approach to the drums can be new and fresh, and I love the freedom to experiment with new ways of playing — technique — and trying out different pieces of equipment — technology.

Like many drummers, I'm sure, I have a special affection for snare drums. After more than forty years of performing and recording, I have gathered a collection of perhaps twenty different kinds — steel, brass, copper, and all manner of shapes and styles of wood, from bamboo to cocobolla, and from piccolo to marching drum. When I begin working on a new project in the studio, I have all of those glittering instruments lined up in a row behind me, and I'll try different ones for each song as I work on my parts. On the past few Rush albums, I typically ended up using six different snare drums, according to what voice and presence each song seemed to want.

In late 2006, though, when we started working on songs for our *Snakes and Arrows* album, all that changed. DW's John Good presented me with one of his new Vertical Low Timbre snare drums, and from the day I first played that VLT snare, I never touched another one.

Its playability, stick response, power, delicacy, and sheer versatility were unmatched by any other drum I had played, plus its sound was simply right for every song — so driving and musical that I never even bothered trying any of the others. That one drum simply did *everything*, perfectly and I can hardly overemphasize how great an accomplishment that is. For this drummin' man, it is a revelation, verging on a miracle.

Best of all, the VLT snare is as satisfying to listen back to as it is to play, and it performed brilliantly in the studio — not just for me, but my bandmates, our co-producer, and our engineer. *Everybody* loved that drum, on every song.

When it came time to prepare for the *Snakes and Arrows* tour in early 2007, I was further delighted to find that this drum dominated the stage, just as it had conquered the studio. For the past few tours I had been using two different DW snare drums — an Edge for indoors, and a Solid for outdoors — but once again, the VLT snare changed all that. On the stage or in the studio, it does everything perfectly.

"I WAS FURTHER DELIGHTED TO FIND THAT THIS DRUM DOMINATED THE STAGE, JUST AS IT HAD CONQUERED THE STUDIO."

So, that collection of old snare drums I've amassed is going to be gathering dust in the warehouse for a while. I may enjoy looking at them from time to time, but I'll probably end up giving them to a music school or something. Everything I need from a snare drum, for old songs, new songs, and especially the wide range of "voices" required for soloing — it's all covered by the omnipotent VLT.

So, there's only one snare drum for me now — unless John Good and DW accomplish the impossible and come up with something even better.

As John would be the first to confess, "Anything is possible."

to be continued.

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ADVERTISEMENT

Bass Drum Pedal Drive Systems

I've heard a lot of debate about whether a chain drive or strap drive is better for a bass drum pedal. I know most drummers use chain drive, but which offers the best response? Also, what are the pros and cons of each type?
Dan Voltz

Chain-drive pedals are offered by almost every pedal manufacturer. They provide great durability, along with a very consistent action. Chains don't stretch, and they rarely break. They can, however, feel a little "stiff" to drummers who play with a light touch. Older chain pedals used to be noisy, but most modern pedals have solved that problem.

Strap-drive pedals, such as those offered by DW, Tama, Pearl, Yamaha, and Gibraltar, are cherished by some drummers for their light feel and sensitive response. Strap pedals are also very quiet. However, straps can stretch, thus changing the feel of the pedal over time. They can also break, though this is rare when using modern web or composite straps.

Perhaps more important to today's high-speed players, straps can "go slack" under extremely fast playing. Chain pedals can have the same problem, though usually less so. Because of this, many ultra-fast double-bass players favor direct-linkage pedals, which connect the footboard to the beater mechanism with a solid metal linkage of some sort. That way, the whole pedal—footboard, linkage, and beater mechanism—moves as one unit. Axis, Gibraltar, and Yamaha make notable models of this type, as does Ludwig: the venerable Speed King.

Ludwig's Speed King has had a direct-drive design since its introduction in the 1960s.

The DW 5000NX features a classic, lightweight strap-drive design.

Pearl's Eliminator pedal is convertible between a double-chain drive and a heavy-duty belt drive.

Yamaha's 9415 Flying Dragon is a recently released direct-drive pedal.

generation K

Percussion is the family business at Zildjian, and Jason can boast the same. The music may be classic, but the cymbals he uses are a modern expression of the days of monster beats and ferocious crashes. Now Jason's new Ride cymbals can give you the same sound he needs to drive an iconic band.

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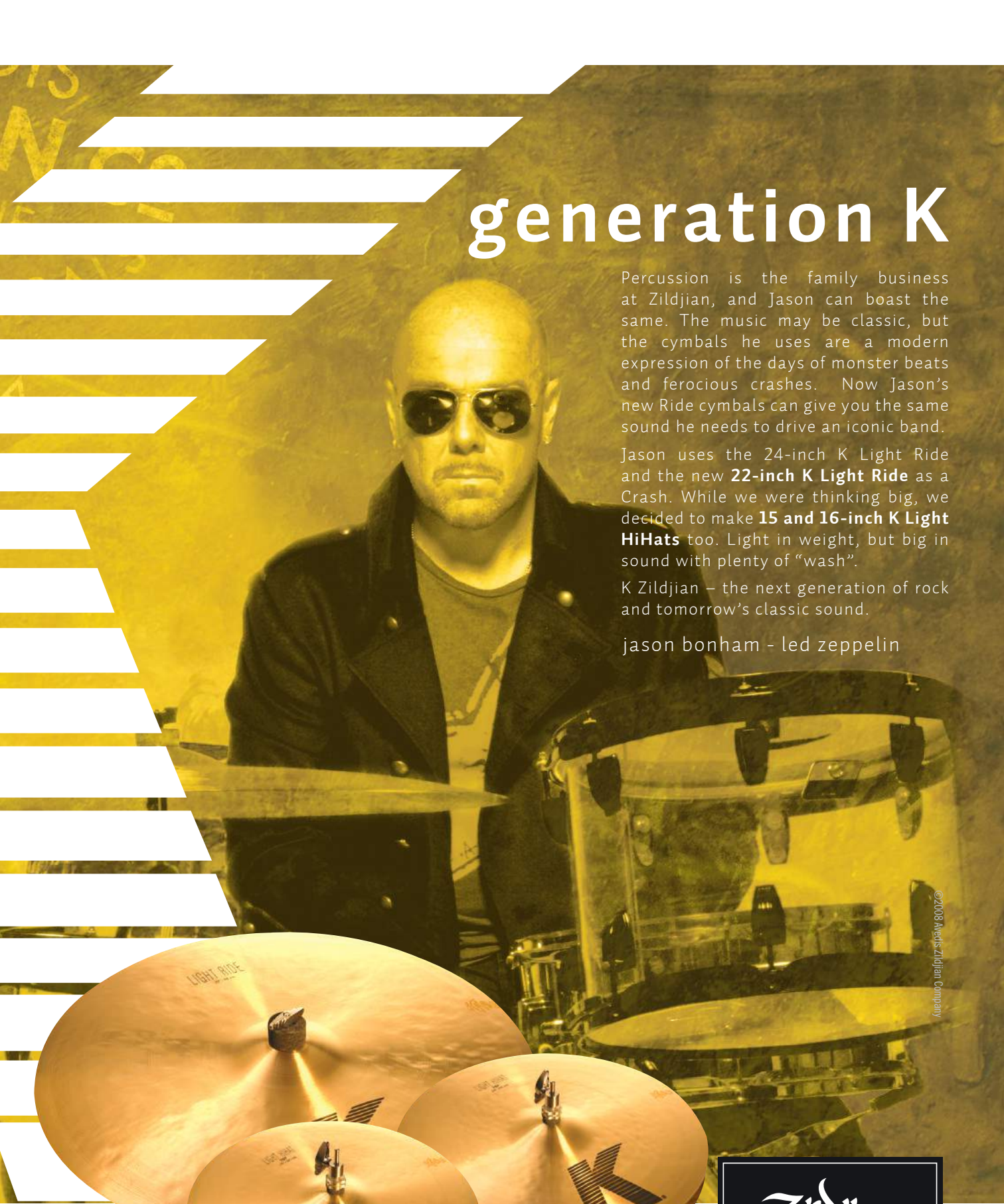
jason bonham - led zeppelin



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Traditional Versus Matched Grip For Drumline

I' ll soon be auditioning for a college marching band drumline that utilizes traditional grip on the snare drums. I play matched grip on drumset and on the snare in my high school drumline, so I' m really not familiar with playing traditional grip in this style.

Can you provide any pointers or guidelines for how to hold the left stick? I understand the wrist motion, but I' m not sure about which fingers should touch the stick, and how much freedom there can be with the stick when doing double/triple strokes and such. Any information you can provide would be extremely helpful.

Ben Huber

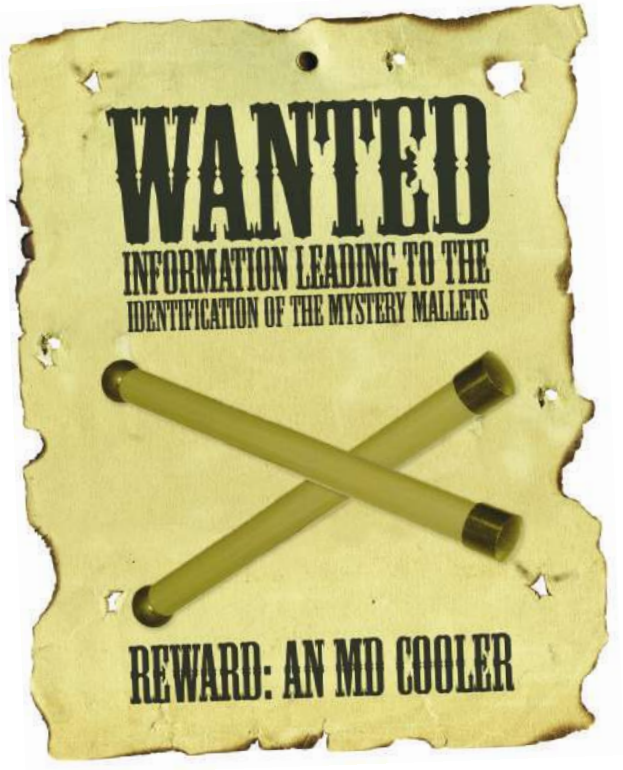
We referred your questions to our rudimental drumming specialist, Chet Doboe from Hip Pickles. Chet responds, " Making the jump from matched grip to traditional grip can be a challenge. When you think about all the time you spent developing facility with matched grip, it leads to the justifiable expectation that it will take some time to get that traditional grip up to snuff. That said, there are some keys that will help you get traditional grip down as quickly and painlessly as possible.

The main part of the left-hand grip is to feel the stick in the webbing of the left hand between the thumb and index finger (Figure 1). This is the pivot point or fulcrum of the left-hand grip. Using this basic grip (at this point, do not use your remaining three fingers), bounce some 8th notes on a pad using the least possible amount of energy to grip the stick. Keep the stick moving up and down in the same path, and strive for a very comfortable and relaxed motion.

" The next step is to put the index finger over the top of the stick and rest the pad of your thumb on the first joint of your index finger. This is the second key part of the left-hand grip (Figure 2). The middle finger will be on top of the stick next to the index finger, while the ring finger is below the stick, creating a platform for the stick to rest on between the first knuckle joint and the fingernail. The pinky will be below the ring finger, lightly supporting the ring finger.

" Now when you play the left hand, you should feel the stick being controlled by a team effort of the fulcrum in the web, the thumb pad lightly pressing on the index finger, and the platform effect of the ring finger. At this point the middle finger serves as a relaxed guide.

As I' m sure you know, Ben, the uniformity of how the whole line plays is a very important element of what makes drumlines cool. That said, in playing double and triple strokes, the goal is to have all players keep the key components of the grip in contact with the stick as much as possible. Having fingers flying off the stick is to be avoided. Always stay relaxed, keep those fingers on the stick, and have the stick do as much of the work as possible."



Mystery Mallets De-Mystified

John Squires of Wheaton, Illinois was the first MD reader to correctly identify the mystery shaker/mallets that appeared in the March It' s Questionable (and win himself an MD cooler). The mallets shown are the 10" kids-size version of Dave Beyer Rattlestix, by Remo. The company also offers an adult version in a 12" size, with snake and lizard graphic designs on the handles.

SEND QUESTIONS TO
miked@moderndrummer.com

Danny Carey (Tool) plays Sonor drums for more than 15 years

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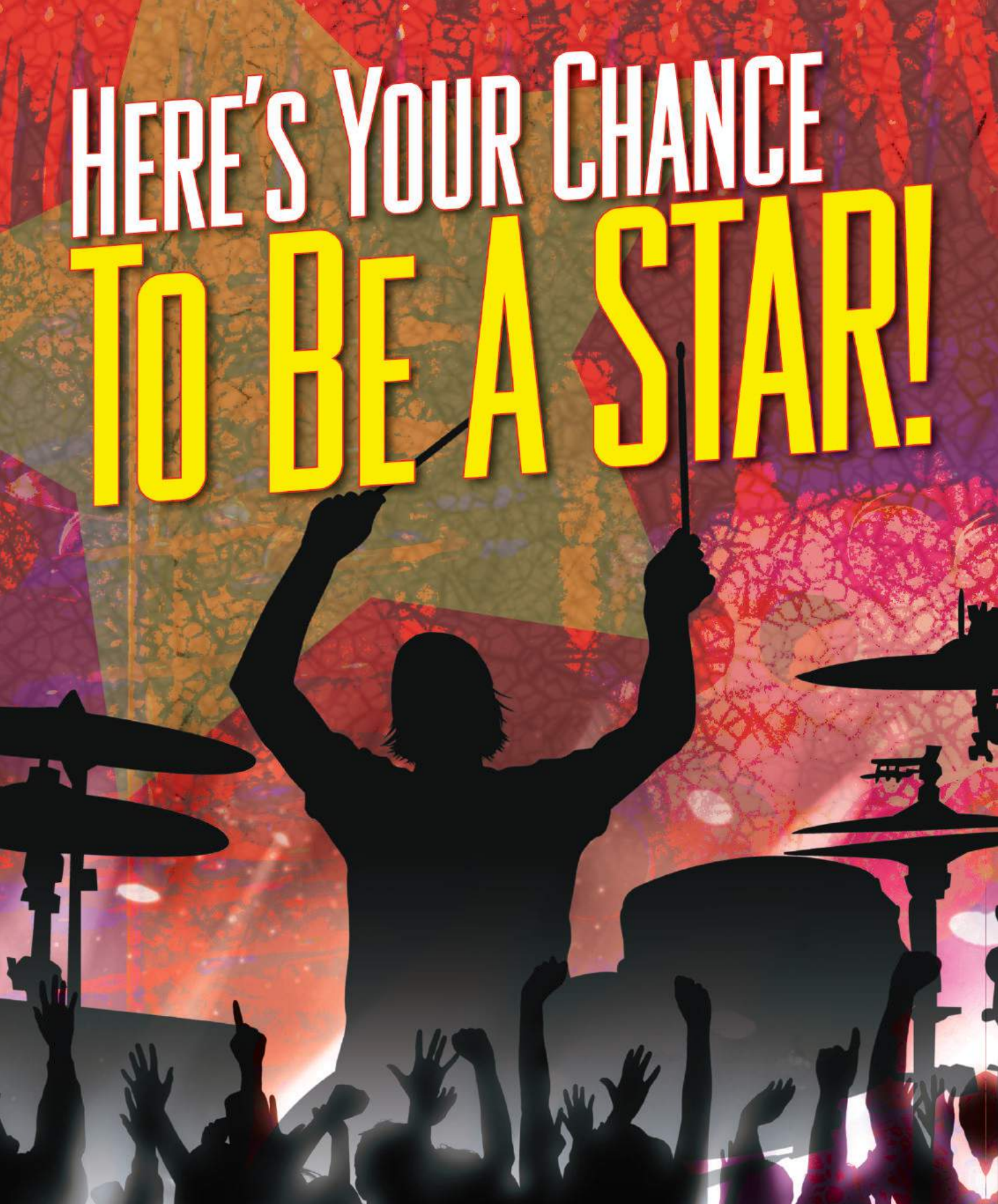

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ENTRY METHOD #1: Performance On YouTube

1. Put a two-minute recorded drum performance on YouTube. Your performance may include time and groove playing in any musical genre (with or without musical accompaniment), or a full two-minute drum solo. Recorded examples lasting longer than two minutes will be disqualified.

2. Submit the following to *Modern Drummer* by regular mail:
- A completed and signed entry form (or photocopy), including the URL link to view your YouTube performance
- A check or money order to *Modern Drummer* for the entry fee of $25 (non-refundable)
- A brief bio of your drumming background (100 words or less)
- Proof of your age. (A copy of your driver's license or birth certificate is acceptable.) Your age as of June 1, 2008 will determine which group your performance is entered into.

3. Mail your entry paperwork to:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest, c/o Modern Drummer,
12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, USA.

ENTRY METHOD #2: Direct Submission To MD

1. Send a two-minute DVD or VHS video of your performance directly to *Modern Drummer*. (European formats cannot be accepted.) Clearly print your name, age, and phone number on your submission.

2. Follow all of the above instructions for the submission of your entry form, entry fee, proof of age, and brief bio to *Modern Drummer*.

3. Mail your complete entry package to:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest, c/o Modern Drummer,
12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, USA.

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OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Name_____
Address_____
City_____
State_____ **Zip**_____ **Country**_____

Tel (_____)_____ **Email**_____
Age as of June 1, 2008_____
My performance can be viewed on YouTube at:
_____

( ) $25 Entry fee enclosed. Check or money order (US Funds), made payable to *Modern Drummer*.

Mail To:
Undiscovered Drummer Contest
Modern Drummer Magazine
12 Old Bridge Road
Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, USA

ENTRY FORM MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN JUNE 1, 2008.

Pearl Vision VBX Birch Kit

Visions Of Thunder

by Mike Haid

KEY NOTES

- High-quality kit with affordable price tag
- Powerful sound
- SensiTone snare drum adds value

Today's drumkit market abounds with makes, models, and configurations in a myriad of price ranges. Now, more than ever, it's important to know what makes a drumkit worth its cost. With Pearl's new mid-level Vision VBX all-birch kit, the quality runs deeper than meets the eye. (And what meets the eye is pretty cool.)

The VBX kit comes with a SensiTone $5^1/_2$x14 steel snare drum, as well as a 900 series hardware pack that includes a bass drum pedal, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, a straight cymbal stand, and a boom cymbal stand. This makes the kit a pretty impressive package.

Another positive selling point is that the VBX series offers nine different kit configurations: six five-piece, two four-piece, and one six-piece. That's a lot of options for a kit at this level.

Pearl markets the VBX kit with the slogan "Next level perfection, for the drummer who can tell the difference." Let's dig into the details of the VBX kit and find out exactly what it has to offer the drummer who's ready to take that ever-so-important step beyond an entry-level kit.

Construction Zone

Our five-piece review kit included an 18x22 bass drum, 9x12 and 10x13 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and the SensiTone snare drum. The bass drum and toms share Reference series–style bridge lugs with rubber gaskets. The high-gloss lacquer finish was the classy Orange Zest—a beautiful burnt-orange metalflake gloss. Other available lacquer finishes include Clear Birch, Ruby Fade, Black Ice, and Concord Fade with black drum hardware.

Vision VBX tom and bass drum shells are built from strategically arranged plies of premium 100% birch. Pearl's SST construction process uses extreme heat, precision-cut scarf joints, proprietary Acoustiglue, and over 1,000 lbs. of hydraulic pressure to create a solid, highly resonant acoustic air chamber. The rack toms feature 6-ply shells, while the floor toms and bass drums are a hefty eight plies, giving the larger drums added strength and projection. The bearing edges on the toms and bass drum are precision crafted, which is always a major factor in great-sounding, resonant shells.

The bass drum supports a bridge-type tom holder that employs Pearl's classic Uni-Lock (L-shaped) tom arms. It's also fitted with Reference-style recessed claws with rubber gaskets. This is all superior-quality hardware that's found on Pearl's higher-end kits. The bass drum also features wood hoops finished to match the shells.

SensiTone Snare

One of the most impressive features of the VBX kit is the classic SensiTone metal snare drum. The custom-alloy steel shell features a center bead for strength and Pearl's bridge lugs for extra resonance. The drum also comes with a "duo-motion" strainer that converts the strainer position from standard side-to-side to "Gladstone-type" lever action at the user's discretion. I've always loved the SensiTone's ability to sound great in any tuning range. This drum never disappoints.

Rack Toms

All of the toms are fitted with standard steel hoops, two-ply clear heads on top, and single-ply heads on the bottom. This head selection works very well for the 9x12 and 10x13 rack toms. The tone those drums produce is fat and warm, with lots of punch and volume.

The rack toms also have lots of resonance, thanks largely to the I.S.S. Integrated Suspension System on which they' re mounted. This system is another import from Pearl' s more expensive lines, and it contributes significantly to the VBX kit' s acoustic performance—and to its value.

Bass Drum And Floor Tom

The 18x22 bass drum is powerful and punchy. Fitted with Perimeter EQ bass drum heads (including a non-ported resonant head) and without any internal muffling, this drum is explosive. The use of internal muffling (and a port in the front head) added definition.

The large, wide-open tone of the unmuffled bass drum is well matched by the powerful 16x16 floor tom. That drum sounds huge, and it can be tuned way down to create a deep, highly resonant low-end rumble.

900 Series Hardware

I' m always appreciative of hardware that' s as easy to assemble and adjust as it is durable. Pearl' s 900 series fits that description, and then some. The single-chain bass drum pedal is smooth and quick. The hi-hat stand is also very smooth, and the snare stand' s toothless

basket-angle adjustment gets the snare angle exactly where you want it. The heavy-duty straight and boom cymbal stands also feature toothless tilters for precision positioning of cymbal angles. Great stuff all around.

Conclusion

The VBX kit is a great value. The high-gloss lacquered bass drum and toms look expensive and professional, and their 100% birch shells sound explosive and resonant. The SensiTone snare drum is a versatile classic. The 900 Series hardware completes the package with durable quality, smooth operation, and simple adjustments.

Vision series kits are the first to be built in Pearl' s all-new state-of-the-art facility in China, with every step of construction performed in-house. In fact, Pearl is so confident in the quality of their work that they' re offering a limited lifetime warranty on Vision series drums. If you' re ready to make the leap from entry-level to affordable pro kit, give the Vision VBX a good hard look.

VBX kits with the Concord Fade finish also feature black drum hardware.

THE NUMBERS

Vision VBX **$1,499**
Model VBX925, as reviewed, includes an 18x22 bass drum, 9x12 and 10x13 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom, a $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 SensiTone steel snare drum, and a 900 series hardware package. Eight other kit configurations are offered ranging from $1,399 to $1,899. Individual component drums are also available.
www.pearldrum.com

SNARE DRUM OF THE MONTH

by Michael Dawson

YAMAHA

$6\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 SENSITIVE CONCEPT

HOW'S IT SOUND?

Don't let the name fool you. Yamaha's 7-ply maple Sensitive Concept snare can handle a lot more than delicate brushwork and whisper-soft buzz rolls. In fact, I used this drum in the studio to cut a modern rock/metal track where I had to pound out heavy backbeats and sharp 16th-note fills. The heads were tuned tight, which helped the drum pop through the track's dense guitars, while the deep maple shell and rounded top bearing edge added a lot of warmth and body to the tone. The overtones were also very controlled, most likely due to the die-cast hoops, so I left off the included muffling ring. I also really enjoyed the crackling rimshot sound of this drum, especially when strung together as rapid-fire Billy Cobham/Ronald Bruner Jr.–type single-stroke rolls.

To test the drum in a live setting, I used it at a rock gig where the drums were unmiked. I tuned the batter head to medium, threw on a little muffling to fatten up the tone, and loosened the snares a bit. Again, the drum performed great, clearly cutting through the mix with a warm, punchy tone at all dynamic levels. In fact, after the show, a member of the headlining band commented on how big and full the drum sounded, even without being miked.

This drum's top bearing edge is cut at a 60° angle to add warmth, while the bottom is 45° for extra sensitivity.

Aluminum die-cast hoops add to the drum's cutting power.

WHAT'S IT COST? **$949.99**

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UFIP Extatic Cymbals

It' s All About The Midrange

by Will Romano

KEY NOTES

- 20" medium ride offers ease of play, clarity, and volume
- 17" and 18" crashes balance dark and light characteristics
- 20" Swish China is multi-toned and dynamic
- 14" and 16" crashes lack bite

UFIP is Italy' s leading cymbal maker, with a tradition that dates back, in one form or another, hundreds of years. The company employs unique production methods to uphold this tradition while meeting the needs of modern drummers. UFIP' s latest offering is the Extatic series.

Going Through The Process

UFIP cymbals are made according to a process known as rotocasting, which rotates and cools molten metal within a mold. According to UFIP literature, rotocasting ensures that the bells of the cymbals are cast thicker in comparison to their surface. This reportedly creates a balanced, uniform sound across the cymbal, and also boosts projection.

Extatic cymbals feature a hybrid raw-glossy finish—the result of a partial lathing process—that helps give them a controlled, midrangy tone, while hand-applied hammering marks on the top and bottom surfaces of the cymbals add definition and extra resonance. The line is intended to bridge the sonic gap between the company' s darker, jazz-oriented cymbals and its heavier, brighter, and more aggressive rock lines. For this review we were sent an assortment of Extatic models, from hi-hats and splashes to crashes and rides.

20" And 22" Rides

The two Extatic rides we were sent pretty much confirmed UFIP' s success at accomplishing their " middle of the road" goal. The 22" Light possessed great volume, smoothness, and clarity—characteristics I chalk up to the cymbal' s rather large bell acting as an anchor for its overall sound.

The 20" Medium matched the larger (and " lighter") disk in projection and cut-through oomph, and had a more concentrated punch. Its bell size is comparable to that of the 22", which might explain this phenomenon. Stick action on the 20" was nearly sci-fi: The hickory seemed drawn to the bell' s slick surface, making it easy to play as well as producing cutting pings.

20" Swish China

Given this model' s name, I was expecting a sizzle China complete with rivets. I was wrong. However, the sound was no less simmering and devastating. The cymbal' s massive sustain, vibrancy, stick definition, small bell (in relation to other large cymbals in this series), sizable hand-hammered scuffs, and pang-like flanged edge all combined to offer a variety of exotic, penetrating multi-toned characteristics.

What this model lacked in traditional China " trash talk," it more than made up for in quality conversation: It worked surprisingly well within a kit. It didn' t speak out in embarrassing ways, and it was capable of creating sizzling, whooshing clangs when I needed it to pipe up.

16", 17", And 18" Medium Crashes

The 17" and 18" medium crashes produced clear cracks every time I struck them. Their stinging, ringing sustain cut through amplified instruments with definition and clarity. These are good, solid cymbals that produce midrange barks. Aside from a very slight pitch difference, they seemed virtually interchangeable.

The 16" medium crash was a world away from the assertiveness and sonic definition of the 17" and 18" sizes. Simply put, it cowered in the corner, without having any real bite. That' s not to say that it lacks a practical purpose. Its frailer qualities would lend themselves more to a traditional jazz setting—on which delicacy would be valued—than to a rock gig, where " lively" and " loud" would be the most important characteristics.

14" Light Crash

The combination of this cymbal's small diameter and light weight seemed to work against it. It was too small and too devoid of cutting power to be an effective crash in any sort of amplified setting—other than, perhaps, close-miking in a studio.

Conversely, the 14" Light crash is too big to be a splash for anyone other than a rock or metal drummer who's looking for an interesting color. In that context, it might prove quite useful. (UFIP also makes Extatic Light crashes in 16", 17", 18", and 20" sizes, but we weren't sent any of those models for review.)

10" And 12" Splashes

I was beginning to think there was a direct correlation between size and sound quality with the Extatic series. Mid- and large-size cymbals performed well, but the opposite end of the size spectrum was inconsistent. So, when it came time to examine these splashes, I wasn't expecting anything to write home about. As it turned out, I was nicely surprised.

Both of these splashes had moderately dark, multi-layered overtones that gave them unexpected sonic depth. The 10" was more in line with the sound you'd expect from a traditional splash cymbal, while the 12" was darker, with more sustain. But each offered a welcome throatiness and gonginess not present in most splashes.

14" HHR And HHX Hi-Hats

The hand-hammered, hybrid-finish HHX and HHR hi-hats are virtually identical in sound, size, and appearance. When I applied a battery of sticking patterns to both pairs, I noticed only a faint textural difference between them. The HHRs seemed to possess better projection and stick definition, likely due to the fact that the HHR top cymbal weighs more than its HHX counterpart.

The bottom cymbal on each pair of hats features anti-airlock holes, which I credit with maintaining the hats' brightness and ability to converse with (and even cut through) the sonic dynamics of the 22" Light and 20" medium rides. In both cases, their "chick" sounds were strong, clear, and even a little brighter than I expected given the overall acoustic nature of the Extatic line.

Conclusion

"Midrange" is certainly the name of the game with the Extatic line. In fact, I thought UFIP's goal of capturing that "in between" sound manifested itself a little too literally in some cases. Still, while this description might sound less than favorable on paper, many of these cymbals are surprisingly multidimensional. They're also quite affordable, considering that they're imported from Italy.

UFIP's Extatic cymbals won't be every drummer's dream. But if you choose wisely from among their models, you could add a new and unique sonic balance to your kit.

THE NUMBERS

10" splash	$120
12" splash	$134
14" HHX and HHR hi-hats	$346
14" Light crash	$172
16" medium crash	$214
17" medium crash	$238
18" medium crash	$257
20" medium ride	$294
22" Light ride	$318
20" Swish China	$339

www.ufip.it

Sabian Choppers And Alu Bells

Crunchy Sting And Warm Ring

by Chap Ostrander

KEY NOTES

- Choppers produce quick, articulate white-noise accents
- Alu Bells have a unique tone for instruments of this design

Non-traditional metal percussion effects seem to be all the rage among drummers and percussionists these days. With that in mind, Sabian has introduced new products that offer a choice of short, crunchy barks or long, ringing tones to add to your arsenal of sounds. Let' s check ' em out.

The Chopper

The Chopper is configured like a set of stacked cymbals, in order to produce a white-noise sound. But it' s actually made up of three flat bronze disks. The bottom disk is a complete circle with a textured finish. The middle disk is cut into a propeller shape, and is also textured. The top disk is also propeller-shaped, with a smooth, polished finish that creates an attractive overall look. Models are available in 8", 10", and 12" sizes.

When the Chopper is struck, you hear the sharp, stinging attack of the disks vibrating together. I was truly surprised by the articulation and clarity of their sounds. The 8" size was high-pitched, the 10" had a medium-high tone, and the 12" was still relatively high, but with a slightly larger presence. Whichever one I played, any sort of pattern came through clearly.

I also tried the 10" disk on a snare drum. If I hit the drumhead just off of the Chopper, the snare sound was chopped off, with highlights from the disks. If I struck right on the Chopper, the sound was even shorter.

If a Chopper is to be mounted on a cymbal stand, you' ll want to make sure that stand is strong and well balanced. The Choppers might look like lightweights by virtue of their small diameters. But you have the equivalent of three cymbals in a very tight package.

Alu Bells

You' ve most likely seen bells like these before now. They' re dome shaped, almost like inverted bowls, with a narrow, flat edge. The bells

are made using traditional sand casting, so the finish is rough. They are also relatively thick.

The element that makes Sabian's Alu Bells unique is that they're made from—you guessed it—aluminum. Frankly, I wasn't sure that aluminum would be a good choice for something that's supposed to ring. But, in fact, the 7" and 9" Alu Bells let out a brilliant, ringing tone when struck. To put it simply: These bells are killers!

The 9" bell has a predictably lower pitch than its 7" sibling. I got the greatest amount of tone from striking the edge. Hitting the dome with the shoulder of my stick generated a useful ping, but hitting the rim produced the most sound. The tone was pure and sweet, and it wavered slightly as the bell rocked from being hit.

One characteristic that I especially enjoyed with the Alu Bells was the warmth of their tone. Many similar bells I've heard that were made of bronze tended to be piercing, with a tone best described as a "clang." The Alu Bells' tone is a bit dryer, though with no lack of sustain. I'd describe it as more of a "clahhng"—with an emphasis on the "ahhh."

Wrap-Up

Sabian has done a great job with these new products. They're both original, and they're both unique. You might not hit them all the time, but when you do, you'll smile.

THE NUMBERS

The Chopper
8" **$219**
10" **$252**
12" **$273**

Alu Bell
7" **$109**
9" **$131**
www.sabian.com

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Quick Looks

Pro-Mark Stealth And Rocket Rods And Smax Specialty Sticks

by Rick Van Horn

Drumming has gotten very specialized. So much so, in fact, that these days specialty stick lines now have sub-specialty models.

Stealth And Rocket Rods

Case in point: It used to be that when sticks were too loud and brushes too soft, you went to rods. But while rods helped "spread" impact sound on drums, they weren't very articulate on ride cymbals. And while they were fine for slapping backbeats, they didn't offer much in the way of rebound for any sort of intricate sticking patterns. Playing rimshots can destroy them, and you could forget about solid-sounding rimclicks.

Pro-Mark's new Stealth and Rocket Rods aim to bridge the gap between traditional sticks and traditional rods by being a little bit of each. Both models feature wood handles that allow for rimshots and solid cymbal crashes. Those handles are made of maple to keep the overall weight down. The shafts feature a contoured shape to further reduce weight, and they're given red rubber grips for comfort.

Stealth Rods are tipped with a 3"-long bundle of black nylon bristles, whose spread is adjustable by means of a sliding O-ring. These nylon bristles produce a sound that is somewhat softer than Pro-Mark's familiar wood-dowel Hot Rods.

Rocket Rods are tipped with ten 3"-long bamboo dowels surrounding a foam core (also with an O-ring). They produce a brighter sound than that of the Stealth Rods, with nearly stick-like rebound. (Lots of fun to play with.) Bamboo is also very durable, so the dowels are likely to last longer than wood equivalents.

Both of these new rod models are likely to find a home in the stick bag of any drummer who needs options when it comes to performance capabilities and acoustic variety. Stealth Rods list for $36.95 per pair; Rocket Rods are priced at $34.95 per pair.

Smax

The aptly named Smax are a cross between a drumstick, a spatula, and a fly swatter. Their hickory handles are tipped with flat, web-shaped forked plastic paddles, in soft (blue), medium (gray), and hard (black) versions.

The hard model provides good bounce for sticking patterns, and it produces a sound that's relatively close to that of a stick on drums and ride cymbals—albeit a little softer. The medium and soft models simply slap down on a drum and lie there, creating a fairly thick sound—with the soft model's response being more delicate than that of the medium. They can set a crash cymbal in motion and be heard on a hi-hat, but forget about using them on rides.

These are definitely special-case tools when it comes to live-performance situations, and their usefulness would totally depend on your application. However, the soft and medium models might make excellent warm-up "sticks," since you could play them safely (and fairly quietly) on any surface, and their lack of rebound would force you to use the muscles of your fingers and hands to bring the sticks back up. I'd keep a pair in my bag for that purpose alone. All three models are priced at $39.95 per pair.

www.promark.com

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SUPERSTAR HYPER-DRIVE

New colors, shorter toms, bigger bass drums and a whole new tonal range. TAMA Superstar Hyper-Drive kits for 2008 are more flexible than ever before: the shorter tom toms can be setup so drummers can be seen and not just heard. And, between the lows of new Ultra Deep bass drum (20x22), the highs of the new shallow toms and the crack of the new 13" snare, there's a new world of sonic space in which to create.

6 piece
SL62HZBN:
gray pewter (top)

5 piece
SK52HXZBN:
sugar white (left)

4 piece
SL44HZBN:
dark desert burst (right)

Highlights From NAMM ' 08

Photos by Alex Solca

Being a drummer at the annual NAMM musical-instrument trade show, held each January in Anaheim, California, is like having Christmas all over again. Exciting new gear is displayed by virtually every percussion manufacturer, large and small. This year' s exhibits included massive drumkits, totally new cymbal lines, radical percussion innovations, and other impressive items.

We' re presenting NAMM ' 08' s most eye-catching highlights here. Many of the familiar brands offered multiple introductions. There were some cool debuts by new manufacturers as well.

Drums

DDRUM

This unique assembly from the US Custom Shop series features drums with a Pionite veneer that bonds chemically to the shell to form a virtually indestructible extra ply. It also includes ddrum's new "handlebar" rack bars, which keep a low profile while spanning bass drums or dipping under other drums.

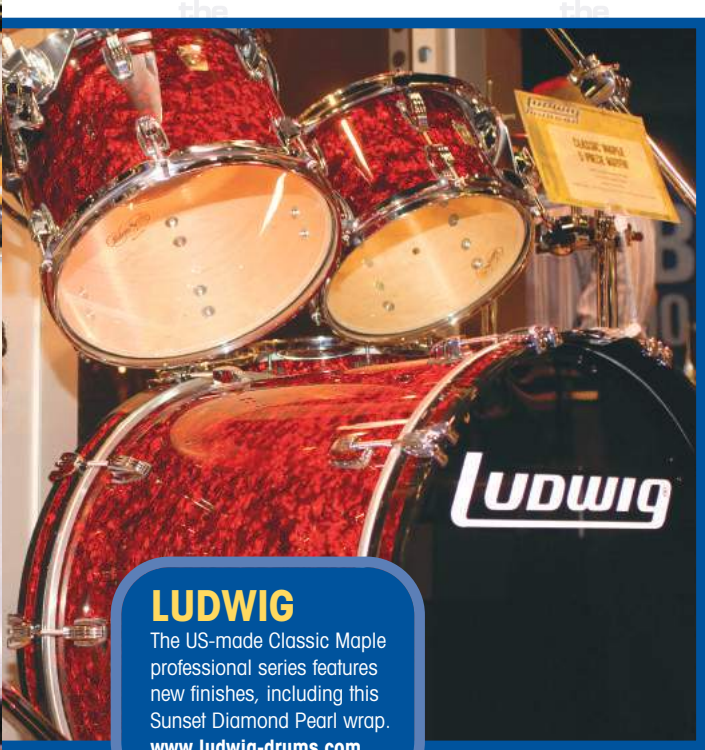
www.ddrum.com

DRUM WORKSHOP

DW used this massive display to showcase their X-ply drumshells, as well as their new 23" bass drum size.
www.dwdrums.com

GRETSCH

These limited-edition snare drums celebrate Gretsch's 125th anniversary this year.
www.gretschdrums.com

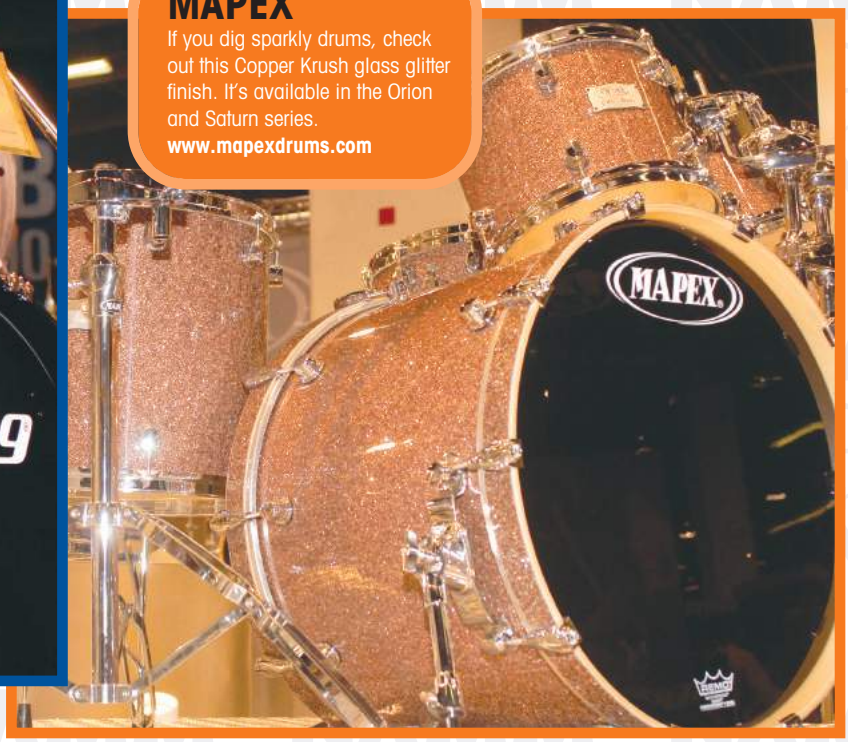


LUDWIG

The US-made Classic Maple professional series features new finishes, including this Sunset Diamond Pearl wrap.
www.ludwig-drums.com

MAPEX

If you dig sparkly drums, check out this Copper Krush glass glitter finish. It's available in the Orion and Saturn series.
www.mapexdrums.com



PACIFIC

This 805 series kit features a new Red Checkers finish with red powder-coated hardware.
www.pacificdrums.com

PEARL

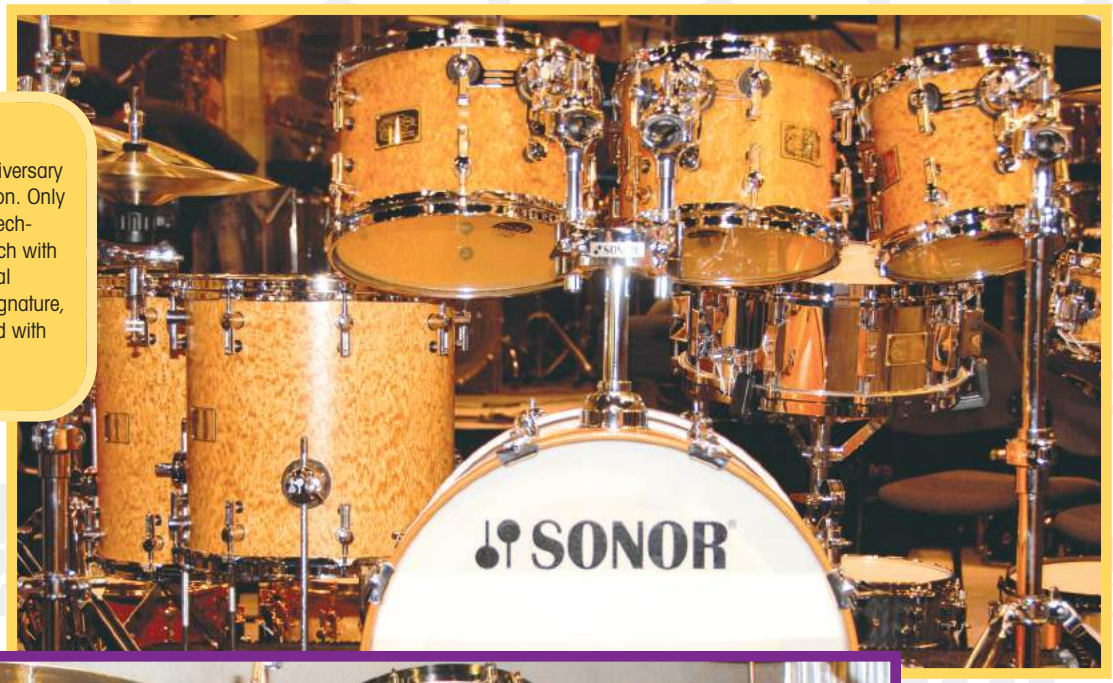
This showstopper from the Masterworks series featured unique original artwork by graphic artist Nub, of TV's *Orange County Choppers*.
www.pearldrum.com

PREMIER

Nicko McBrain's signature kit is decorated with graphics of Iron Maiden's iconic mascot, Eddie.
www.premier-percussion.com

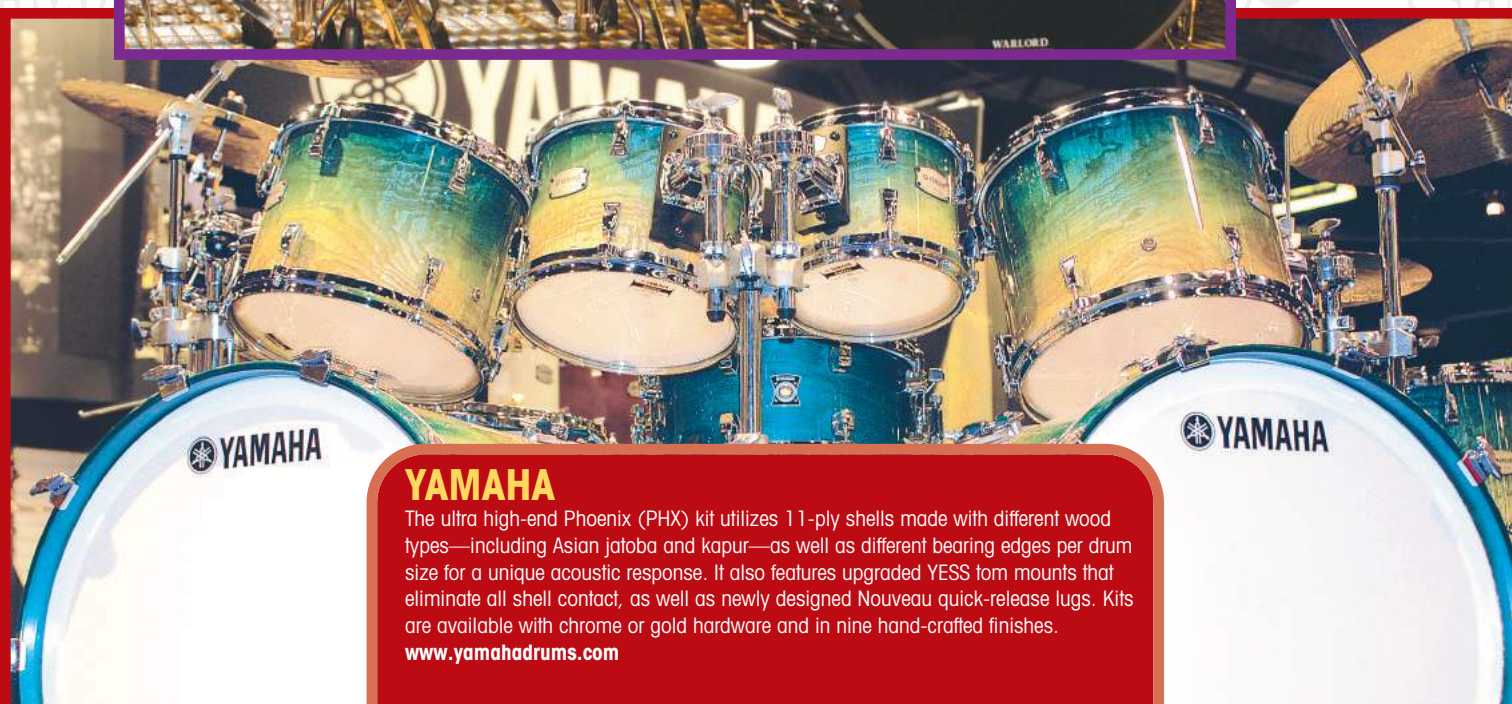
SONOR

The Steve Smith 30th Anniversary series kit is a limited edition. Only a hundred of the 9-ply beech-wood kits will be sold, each with two snare drums, a special badge featuring Steve's signature, and an MP3 player loaded with Steve's historic works.
www.sonor.com



TAMA

This year's limited-edition Exotix kit is the first not to be offered in an exotic wood. Instead it's a stainless-steel kit with a design inspired by the Warlord snare drum series.
www.tama.com

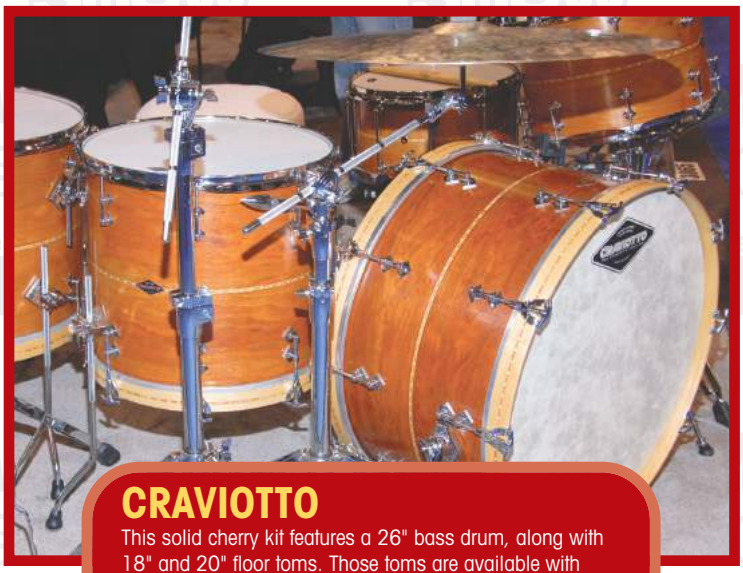


YAMAHA

The ultra high-end Phoenix (PHX) kit utilizes 11-ply shells made with different wood types—including Asian jatoba and kapur—as well as different bearing edges per drum size for a unique acoustic response. It also features upgraded YESS tom mounts that eliminate all shell contact, as well as newly designed Nouveau quick-release lugs. Kits are available with chrome or gold hardware and in nine hand-crafted finishes.
www.yamahadrums.com

CANNON

When Cannon Toms were originally introduced in the early '80s, they were the first add-on melodic tubular toms. The 8"-diameter drums are available again, in eight depths and several price ranges.
www.universalpercussion.com



CRAVIOTTO

This solid cherry kit features a 26" bass drum, along with 18" and 20" floor toms. Those toms are available with optional wood bottom hoops and bass drum spur assemblies installed, allowing quick conversion for bass drum use.
www.craviottodrums.com

GMS

The sparkle finish of this G-28 kit is contained within its all-acrylic shells. The design is an homage to the classic Z-28 Camaro.
www.gmsdrums.com

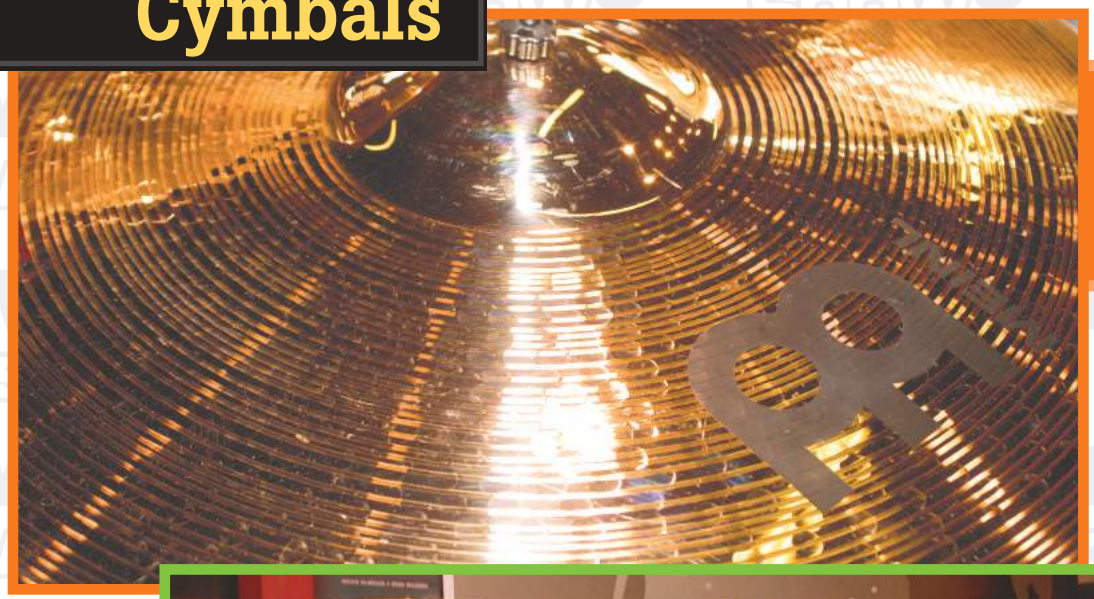
SPAUN

This double-layered kit features shell cut-outs, as well as vents within the bearing edges that allow air to escape between the two shell layers (from just under the drumhead) rather than out of a traditional hole in the shell.
www.spaundrums.com

SQUARE DRUMS

In what has to be the wildest design we've seen in years, these acrylic drums feature a square box incorporated into their shells.
www.squaredrums.com

Cymbals



MEINL

The new Mb8 series is a professional-level line designed to produce outstanding volume and brightness.
www.meinlcymbals.com

PAISTE

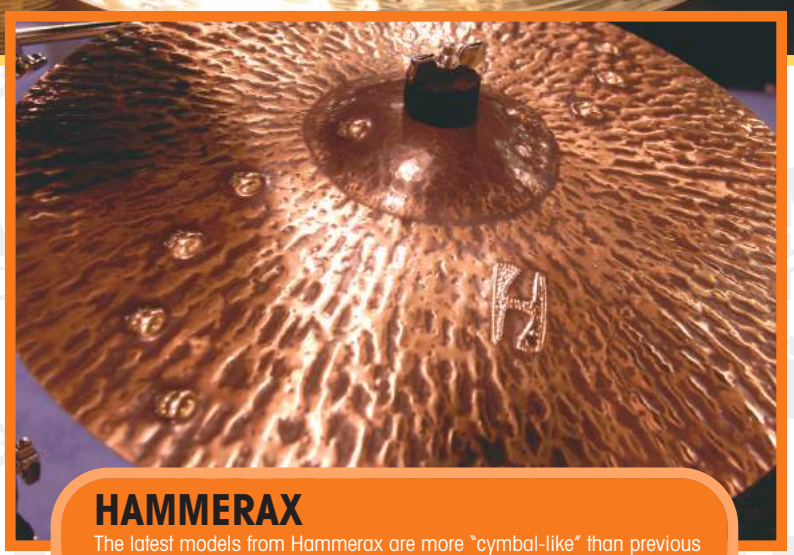
Additions to Paiste's Twenty series include a wider selection of splashes, crashes, and hats, as well as a new sub-series of lighter-weight models.
www.paiste.com

SABIAN

Sabian's new APX series is designed to cut through loud music without having to be beaten to death. An Ozone Crash model adds color to the mix.
www.sabian.com

ZILDJIAN

Zildjian and jazz great Terri Lyne Carrington have worked together to re-design and re-launch the 22" K Custom High-Definition ride.
www.zildjian.com



HAMMERAX

The latest models from Hammerax are more "cymbal-like" than previous creations. These include Button Crashes, which produce a pure crash sound with virtually no "after-hum," and Button Rides, whose raised "buttons" offer additional ride points for a variety of tonalities.
www.hammerax.com

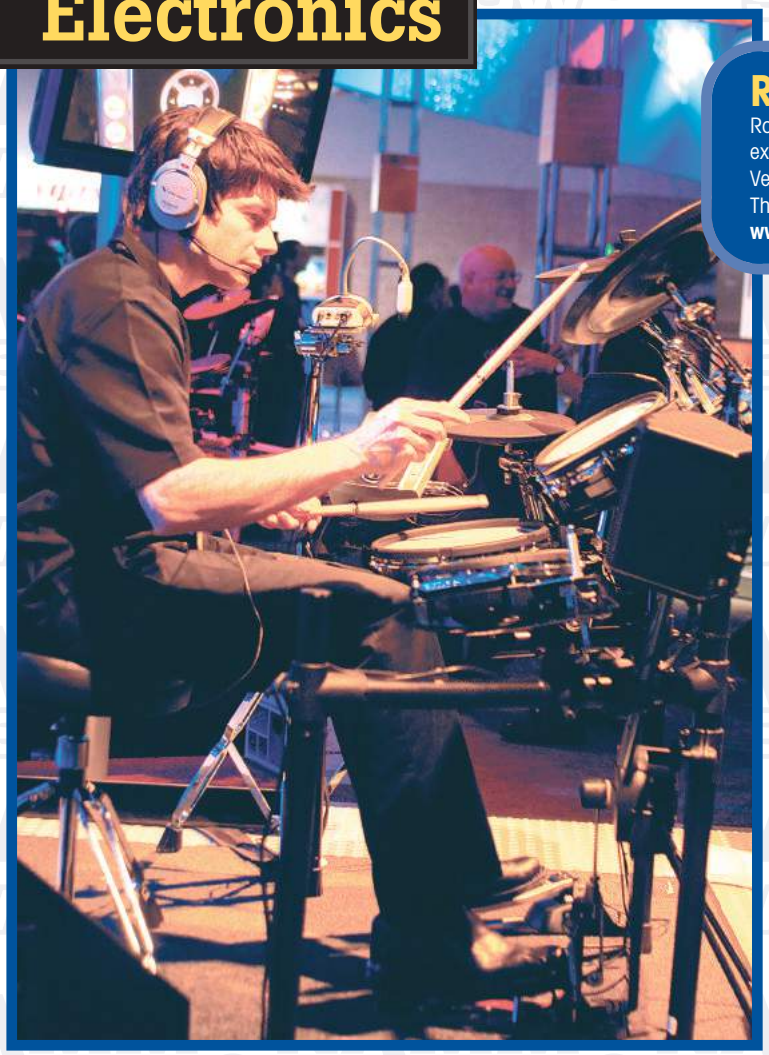
BOSPHORUS

The Rikki Rockett signature ride is designed to provide darkness and warmth while still being powerful enough to cut through loud amps. It's available in 20" and 22" sizes.
www.bosphoruscymbals.com

ISTANBUL AGOP

Istanbul Agop's offerings include the Epoch signature ride for fusion legend Lenny White (left), as well as a signature ride designed with jazz/R&B great Idris Muhammad.
www.istanbulcymbals.com

Electronics

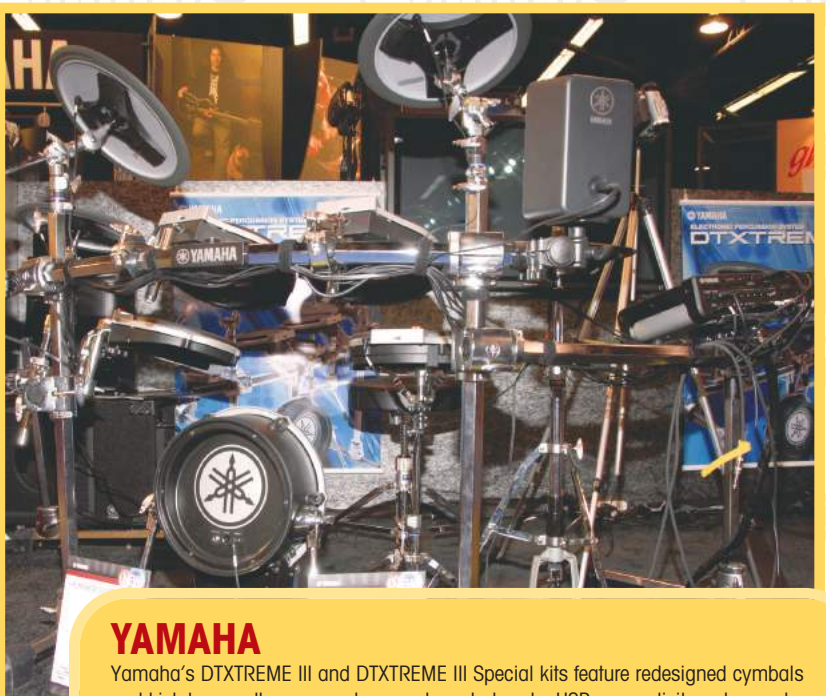


ROLAND

Roland's new TD-9 SX replaces the TD-6, demonstrated here by electro-expert Johnny Rabb, as a mid-price performance-quality electronic kit. Versions are available with all mesh heads or with some rubber pads. The sound module features USB external access for flash disks.
www.rolandus.com

B-BAND

What looks like a label with a tail on it is actually a super-compact Ukko internal drum microphone offered by B-Band. It connects through a drum's air vent to a chromed pre-amp/mic connector on the outside of the shell. Mics are pre-tuned for each drum size, and are sold in kits containing mics for snare, kick, and three toms.
www.b-band.com



YAMAHA

Yamaha's DTXTREME III and DTXTREME III Special kits feature redesigned cymbals and kick towers, three-zone drum and cymbal pads, USB connectivity, advanced internal sequencers, and all-new sound modules with over a thousand onboard voices and over a hundred general MIDI voices. The Special kit version comes with Yamaha's new Hex rack system.
www.yamahadrums.com

2BOX

DrumIt Five electronic drums from 2box were created by Swedish designer Bengt Lilja—the man behind the original ddrum digital drumkits. Mesh heads, digital sounds, extensive programmability, and a simple and efficient rack design are among the features of the new kits.
www.2box.se

Hardware

DRUM WORKSHOP

The 5000ADH pedal does away with the heel plate entirely in order to provide a more comfortable foot position for drummers who play exclusively heel-up.
www.dwdrums.com

GIBRALTAR

The Hi-Hat Off Time (HHOT) attachment is now available complete with the Chik Effects Pack: chromed steel hi-hat "cymbals" that can be set to work in opposition to the cymbals on the regular hi-hat for rhythmic effects.
www.gibraltarhardware.com

PEARL

Flush-base stands are light and handy, but their legs can interfere with each other. The BC100S boom cymbal stand can convert from a fully flush-base configuration to a more standard tripod base in order to eliminate this problem.
www.pearldrum.com

YAMAHA

The all-new Hex Rack System features hex-shaped pipes said to provide superior strength over tubular rack pipes. A mounting system combining Arm Clamps and Synthetic Open Spheres provides virtually infinite flexibility in drumkit set-up. The rack shown here is on Yamaha's new Stage Custom Birch kit.
www.yamahadrums.com

DRUMNETICS

The innovative Drumnetics magnetic-action pedal is now available in a double version. The axle features helical-cut spring-steel couplings rather than universal joints, for a direct-drive feel.
www.drumnetics.com

TRICK

The Dominator bass drum pedal retains the high-quality construction and design elements of Trick's Pro 1-V, but simplifies or eliminates certain features in order to reduce cost by about a third.
www.trickdrums.com

Percussion

FACTORY METAL PERCUSSION

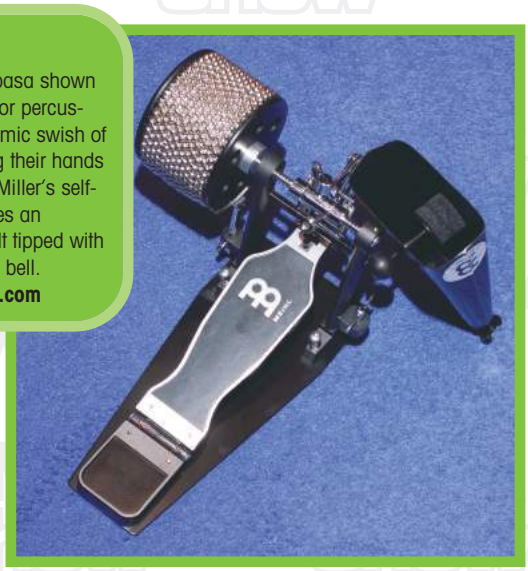
FMP has introduced a new Proline FX series made of mirror-finish stainless steel, as well as Multistackers that can hold several effects instruments.
www.factorymetalpercussion.com

LATIN PERCUSSION

Limited-edition 2008 Giovanni Series Palladium congas feature "old-style, New York" sizes and distinctive colors that are personal to Gio.
www.lpmusic.com

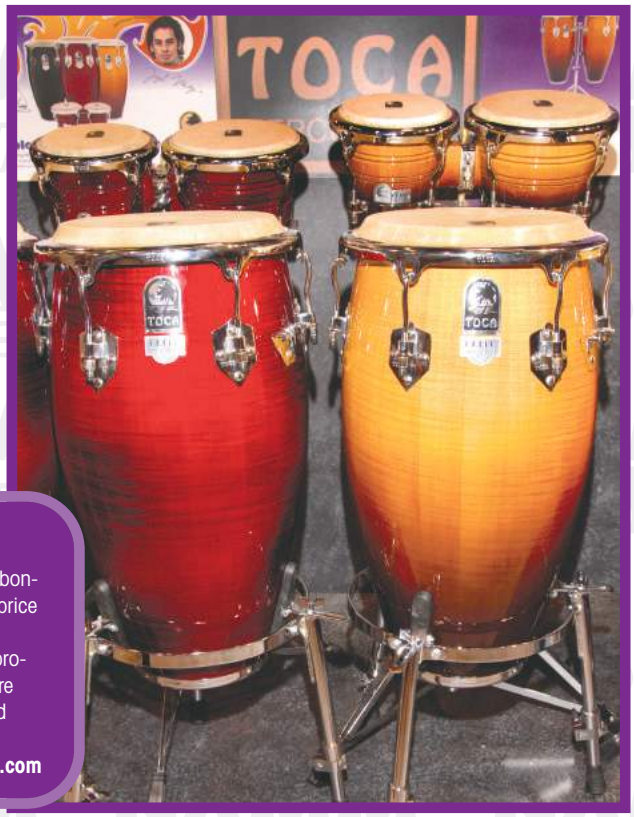
MEINL

The pedal-operated cabasa shown here allows drummers or percussionists to get the rhythmic swish of a cabasa while keeping their hands free. Meanwhile, Russ Miller's self-muffling cowbell features an adjustable threaded bolt tipped with a cymbal felt inside the bell.
www.meinlpercussion.com



TYCOON

These Master Handcrafted Pinstripe congas aren't just painted. The grooves are painstakingly hand-engraved into the hardwood shells. The look is enhanced by the Antique Copper finish on the hardware.
www.tycoonmusic.com



TOCA

Elite Pro congas and bongos are intermediate-price performance-quality drums offered in full professional sizes. They're available in wood and fiberglass.
www.tocapercussion.com

Drumsticks

AHEAD

New specialty sticks include Switch Stix (mallet/stick) and BamStix (bamboo multi-rod) models.
www.bigbangdist.com

REGAL TIP

This limited-edition tour-logo model of the Alex Van Halen signature stick celebrates Regal Tip's long-time association with the rock-drumming great.
www.regaltip.com

VATER

A Traditional Jazz model has been added to the Splashstick series.
www.vater.com

VIC FIRTH

Several signature stick models are new from Vic Firth. This Joey Heredia model features an unusual tip design.
www.vicfirth.com

HOT STICKS

Most artist-model sticks feature a signature. Danny Gottlieb's model is imprinted with photos of Danny from various stages of his career.
www.hotsticksdrumsticks.com

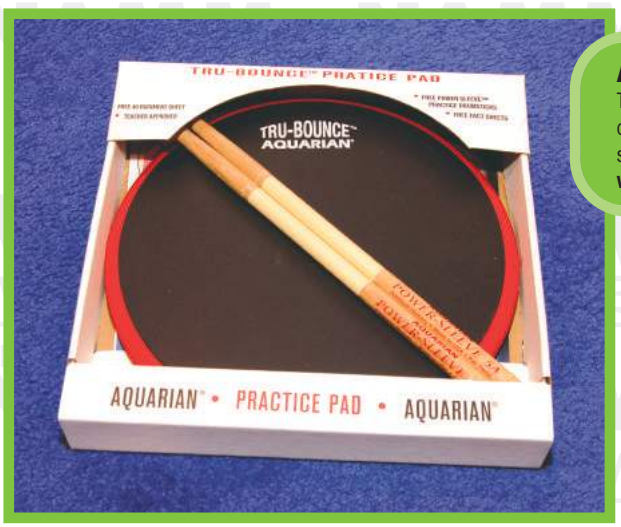
Drumheads & Accessories

EVANS

Evans' EC Resonant heads are the first to apply built-in tonal control to the bottom heads of toms. The Hybrid drumset snare batter offers innovative marching-head technology and durability to drumset players.
www.evansdrumheads.com

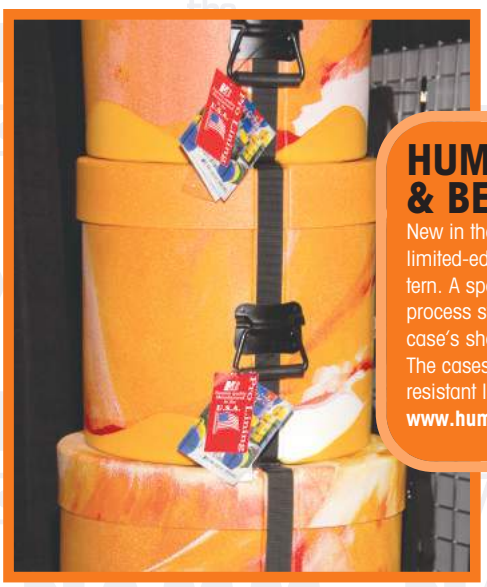
REMO

New Black Suede models from Remo are available in Ambassador and Emperor weights, in addition to a Black X dotted snare batter. They offer a warm sound with the somewhat sinister look of a "flat black" finish.
www.remo.com



AQUARIAN

The Tru-Bounce pad is designed to reproduce clear, distinct beats at any volume. It's sold in a package that includes a pair of practice sticks, a rudiment chart, and fact sheets from Roy Burns.
www.aquariandrumheads.com



HUMES & BERG

New in the Enduro case line is this limited-edition Sunburst color pattern. A special manufacturing process swirls the color into each case's shell, so no two are alike. The cases feature padded, tear-resistant linings.
www.humes-berg.com

HQ PERCUSSION

The Bass Mute uses a crossbar assembly to hold a foam muffler and a beater-impact pad for quiet "live" practice on a bass drum. The unit adjusts to fit drums from 18" to 26".
www.hqpercussion.com

SONOR Zildjian HUDSON MUSIC dw

Grand Prize – one (1) winner will receive: **SONOR** Steve Smith 30th Anniversary Drums 16″x20″ Bass Drum, 14″x14″ and 16″x16″ Floor Toms, 8″x8″, 8″x10″ and 8″x12″ Tom Toms, 5″x12″ and 5.5″x14″ Snare Drums, Double and Single Tom Holders and Multiclamp (NOTE: CYMBAL, SNARE DRUM AND HI-HAT STANDS ARE NOT INCLUDED), **ZILDJIAN CYMBALS** 22″ A Medium Ride, 14″ Armand Hi-Hats, 18″ Armand Thin Crash, 18″ Hybrid Thin Crash, 9″ Hybrid Splash, 19″ "Beautiful Baby" Ride, 20″ K Flat Ride, **DRUM WORKSHOP** 9002 Double Bass Drum Pedal and Steve Smith Backstage BD Pad, **HUDSON MUSIC** Autographed Steve Smith DVD Pack (Drum Legacy, The Art Of Brushes and Drumset Techniques/The U.S. Beat), **REMO DRUMHEADS** 8″, 10″, 12″, 14″, 16″ Clear Ambassador (2 each), 12″ Coated Ambassador, 14″ Fiberskin 3 Diplomat, 12″ and 14″ Ambassador Snare Side and 20" Clear Powerstroke 3, **VIC FIRTH** 6 pr. Steve Smith Signature drumsticks and 3 pr. Tala Wands, **MODERN DRUMMER** Digital Archives Years 1-25 and 26 and **PURESOUND** P-1420 Custom Snare Wires. Approximate retail value of prize: $19,500. **Second Prize** - Three (3) winners will each receive: **ZILDJIAN CYMBALS** Classic T-Shirt, **DRUM WORKSHOP** 9000 Single Bass Drum Pedal and Steve Smith Backstage BD Pad, **HUDSON MUSIC** Autographed Steve Smith DVD Pack, **REMO DRUMHEADS** 22″ PowerSonic and 14″ Black-X, **VIC FIRTH** 4 pr. Steve Smith Signature drumsticks and 1 pr. Tala Wands, **MODERN DRUMMER** Digital Archives Years 1-25 and **PURESOUND** P-1420 Custom Snare Wires. Approximate retail value of prize: $2,000.00. **Third Prize** – Five (5) winners will each receive: **ZILDJIAN CYMBALS** Classic T-Shirt, **DRUM WORKSHOP** Steve Smith Backstage Practice Pad, **HUDSON MUSIC** Autographed Steve Smith DVD Pack, **REMO DRUMHEADS** 14″ Black-X, **VIC FIRTH** 4 pr. Steve Smith Signature drumsticks, **MODERN DRUMMER** Digital Archives Year 26 and **PURESOUND** P-1420 Custom Snare Wires. Approximate retail value of prize: $1,500.00. Approximate retail value of all prizes: $23,000.00.

To enter, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Steve Smith Drum Legacy Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS April 1, 2008 AND ENDS May 31, 2008. POSTCARD ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED BY May 31, 2008 AND RECEIVED BY June 5, 2008. 4. Grand Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on June 17, 2008. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about June 18, 2008. 5. Employees, and their immediate families of Modern Drummer, Sonor, Zildjian, Drum Workshop, Remo, Vic Firth, Puresound, Hudson, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada, Florida, and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 10. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Steve Smith Drum Legacy/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

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Steve Smith's Drum Legacy
new from Hudson Music

photos by: Andrew lepley

Last year, drumming dynamo Cindy Blackman left behind her big-ticket rock gig with Lenny Kravitz to unleash the jazz devil inside. Her drumming prowess is simply astounding—and is now finally on full display.

CINDY BLACKMAN

THE LADY COMES TO PLAY

Story by Ken Micallef · Photos by Andrew Lepley

Serial jazz and rock drum killer Cindy Blackman is the kind of ultra-talented, well-trained, and dynamically inspired musician who could only exist in the new millennium. Her tenth, double CD, *Music For The New Millennium,* shows a creative force to be reckoned with, revealed in the album's amalgam of late-'60s Miles Davis–inspired compositions (in classic quartet format) fired by drumming that could fairly be described as jazz toxic shock therapy.

Undaunted by pedigree, gender, or era, Blackman takes on a challenge many drummers have failed to rise to. Describing her hero Tony Williams as "the technology of the drumming world," she goes about making his innovations her own. Blackman makes no bones about her total fascination and admiration for the heroic figure who not only inspired some of Miles Davis's greatest recordings but who practically invented jazz-rock (i.e., fusion) with his 1969 album, *Emergency!* Her drumming reflects every concept Tony Williams is associated with.

Performing recently with her crack quartet at New York's Jazz Standard, Blackman came on like a whirlwind, driving her group's atmospheric treatments with fulminating flam combinations, outrageous single stroke–roll meltdowns, and full-set phrases all within a boiling pulse. Never saying a word, Blackman looked fierce on her small Gretsch set, kicking her quartet with explosive drumming that left nothing to the imagination. *Music For The New Millennium* extends the music heard at the Jazz Standard, with Blackman coupling blast furnace drumming styles modeled on *Believe It, Four & More,* and *Million Dollar Legs* with an abstract melodic and compositional approach.

That Blackman would become a Tony Williams disciple wasn't a sure thing when she was growing up in Hartford, Connecticut. Attracted to the instrument early on, she became active in the local Forestville Fife & Drum Corps at age eleven, studied at the nearby Hart School Of Music during high school, then enrolled at Berklee School Of Music, where she studied classical snare drum, harmony, and drumset (eventually with legendary instructor Alan Dawson). It was during her later high school years that Blackman was exposed to Tony Williams, an epiphany that inspires her to this day.

"When I first heard Tony on Miles Davis's *Four & More,* I was trippin'," she recalls from her Brooklyn apartment. "A friend who played it for me told me Tony was sixteen when he recorded it. He was my age and playing like that?! Then he put on Miles' *Live In Europe.* I was completely hooked into Tony from that moment on."

Post Berklee, in 1982 Blackman headed to New York, where she became a first-call player, working with Sam Rivers, Jackie McLean, Joe Henderson, George Benson, Wallace Roney, Patti LaBelle, and Rachel Z. Her first solo album, 1987's *Arcane,* proved her talent went well beyond drumming. To expand her horizons further, Blackman donned an Afro wig and a fierce countenance for what was to become a fifteen-year association with Lenny Kravitz, joining the retro rocker's band in the early '90s. But her jazz allegiance never waned, as further albums *Code Red, The Oracle,* and *Telepathy* adhered to post-bop logic and terrific Tony stylings.

Cindy Blackman's Brooklyn loft is evidence of someone who knows how to enjoy the finer things in life. A beautiful '50s-era Gretsch round-badge Broadkaster set sits in one corner, across from an otherworldly looking, $100,000 high-tech sound system. Her good taste is evident in every aspect of the loft's design, from Moroccan-styled tile work to a multi-volume Miles Davis DVD collection. But Blackman's drumming remains first and foremost in her consciousness, and every ounce of her being is focused on advancing her art. There's no doubt about it, Cindy Blackman comes to play.

MD: Whether you' re playing rock or jazz, you always project a great sense of presence on the drums. You are there to play.

Cindy: I do come to play, and whatever I' m doing I want to make it the best that I can make it for that moment. If I' m playing rock within somebody else' s concept, then for that moment I own it like it' s mine. If I' m playing my own music, I own that already.

I once heard Ron Carter ask, " What do young musicians have to do other than play their instrument and be ready to play when they' re called upon?" I never forgot that. What else do you have to do but that? If you have something else to do, then maybe you' re in the wrong field.

MD: How do you maintain that level of energy and exuberance? You sound like you' re ready to go full bore every time you sit at the drums.

Cindy: Just by loving what I do. I love playing the drums and playing music. When I think that I' m chasing the legends of Art Blakey, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones, I' d better be ready. You better

"PEOPLE SAY IT ISN'T ABOUT EGO, BUT IT IS ABOUT EGO. IT'S ABOUT MAKING SURE YOU'RE THE BEST YOU CAN BE."

smack those drums, because those cats weren' t messing around. I' ve seen Art Blakey play and the whole stage shake. I' ve seen Elvin play with brushes and the snare drum popped off the stand. I' ve seen Tony play and everything bowled over like a big Mac truck.

MD: Is that insistence on laying it down missing in some younger players, or is it that they just didn' t get the chance to experience those masters?

Cindy: That is missing sometimes. There' s an urgency that drummers and musicians and people in the ' 60s had, and it' s to do with what' s happening socially. In the ' 60s when all those people that I mentioned had their incredible bands and playing situations, the times were very tumultuous. That lends itself to everyone having a certain kind of urgency when they play. The ' 60s is my favorite period. The music was on edge and cutting. People knew they had to do individualized thinking and get away from the norm. And that was reflected in the music. I love that energy, and I think about that a lot. I tap into that.

MD: Your new record and your gig at the Jazz Standard seemed to be as much about the mental state, about your attitude, as the music or technique.

Cindy: Definitely. I want to get to the point where the music goes beyond technique. I was hanging out with Wallace Roney in the late ' 80s, and we saw a Wayne Shorter clinic at William Paterson College. He was talking about technique. He said, " Technique is a means to converse; it' s building your language." You don' t just play to be fast or have some licks, it' s a way to make a statement and form colors. It' s a way of speaking. When you think in those terms, it takes it to a whole new level.

MD: Often, drummers with massive technique or facility act like the technique is meaningless.

Cindy: You have to develop a language. Without a language, how are you going to speak? People say it isn' t about ego, but it is about ego. It' s not about having an overrun of ego or hurting somebody else, but it' s about making sure you' re the best you can be. There' s the good side to ego and technique. There' s also a bad side, but you have to find a fine line and use it in a way that allows you to be the most musical.

MD: Some drummers have the same personality on and off the kit. But with you it' s like here' s nice and normal Cindy, and then you hit the drums and you' re the Terminator.

CINDY'S JAZZ SETUP

Drums: Gretsch, in deep ocean blue harlequin finish (by Innovation Drum's Steve Badalamenti)
A. 6x14 snare
B. 8x12 mounted tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 14x18 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" K Constantinople hi-hats
2. 18" K Constantinople crash
3. 22" K Dark medium ride

Hardware: DW, including a 5000 series hi-hat stand and bass drum pedal

Heads: Remo Renaissance Ambassador snare batter (Ambassador snare-side, Fiberskyn Ambassador on tops of toms with Fiberskyn Diplomats underneath, Renaissance Ambassador on bass drum batter with Fiberskyn Ambassador on front.

Sticks: Zildjian Cindy Blackman signature (wood tip), Zildjian stick bag. Re[illegible]

TUNING FOR TONE

No question, Cindy Blackman loved Tony Williams' drumming and his sound. And while she has her own sound, there are some obvious similarities between hers and Tony's. Here are Cindy's thoughts on tuning.

Cindy: I played a bigger 6 1/2x14 snare on *Music For The New Millennium,* 9x13 and 10x14 mounted toms, 14x14 and 16x18 floor toms, and a 14x24 bass drum. That's Tony's setup from *Believe It,* that big yellow kit. But now I'm hearing a small set. I want to develop that small-set sound.

I keep my bass drum wide open. And I play heel-down on the bass drum if I'm playing all fours, but heel-up if I'm playing faster.

MD: Your toms on record have that same solid, impactful sound that Tony had.

Cindy: I tune my toms rather tightly. I want a good note and I want the drums to project. They're tuned tighter on the top and a little looser on the bottom. My toms are tight in general. I tune the snare tight as well. I'm going for a sound and tone. I want the bass drum to sing and be a part of the overall melodic picture of the drumset, so everything I do sounds musical rather than simply sounding like a bass drum accent. I want what I play on the entire kit to sound like part of a musical phrase.

Cindy: I've heard people say something similar!

MD: Is that ego? Do you adopt a different persona on the drums?

Cindy: I don't call that ego. I call that drive. When I'm on the drums, all bets are off. I'm here to play. I'm ready to kick some butt as best I can at that moment. Once I hit that kit I want to shift into a whole different gear. I become more determined and more focused.

Leaving Lenny

MD: You left Lenny Kravitz in 2004?

Cindy: Yes, and again in June, 2007. Why did I leave? It's a long story. Some of it I don't want to get into. There's a lot involved when you play with somebody for fifteen years. In rock, the only groups that have that kind of history are The Rolling Stones or Aerosmith, and those groups have a thing, which Lenny's band also had. It's an incredible chemistry that grew. It was a tight unit, and everybody knew everyone and was comfortable. You have to get along and not want to smack anyone.

MD: Did you smack Lenny Kravitz?

Cindy: No, but we did race buses once—and I won!

Embracing Tony

MD: Music For The New Millennium references late-'60s Miles Davis albums like E.S.P. and Filles De Kilimanjaro. And the drumming recalls those albums as well as Tony Williams' Believe It, but with your own touch and approach. It's one thing to aim for that style, which everyone does if they're serious, but you have seemingly mastered it. What were the keys to getting there? Did you live and breathe Tony Williams for five years?

Cindy: Five years? How about living and breathing that guy since I was a teenager? When I first heard Tony on Miles Davis' s Four & More, I was trippin'.

In 1976 a friend called and told me Tony was doing a clinic at Creative Music, near where I lived in Hartford. When I saw Tony in person, I saw his technique, his touch, his attitude, and his bravado. He played with bassist Bunny Brunel, so I got to see him interact. I hadn't seen anything that exciting before. I became completely enthralled with Tony Williams. After seeing him, that gave me a goal and the path that I wanted to follow. I just had to figure out a way to get there, how to start.

Later I went to Berklee, and that's when I met Wallace Roney. He introduced me to records with Tony that I hadn't heard, like Filles De Kilimanjaro; that freaked me out again. I had a barrage of new information that I listened to constantly. I still listen to Tony all the time. He is a sound innovator, as well as a technical innovator and a conceptual innovator. He can do no wrong for me.

MD: What is it about Tony Williams' language that we as drummers find so incredible?

Cindy: Tony was an innovator at such a young age. He's a culmination of everything great that came before him, rolled up into his vision. Tony has all the history, all the presence, and all the future rolled up in his playing. Tony turns things around and plays them in different places than the incredible guys before him would. He added a whole new twist. The technology of the drumming world is Tony Williams.

MD: One can learn to play things we associate with Tony: the broken triplets, the flam combinations, driving four on the hi-hat..but how do you apply those things cohesively and with that mindset?

Cindy: It's the way you hear. Again, you can learn the technique of something;

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Cindy Blackman	Arcane
Cindy Blackman	Code Red
Cindy Blackman	The Oracle
Cindy Blackman	Telepathy
Joss Stone	Soul Sessions
Joss Stone	Mind, Body & Soul
Lenny Kravitz	5

HER FAVES

ARTIST	ALBUM	DRUMMER
Miles Davis	Milestones	Philly Joe Jones
Miles Davis	Filles De Kilimanjaro	Tony Williams
Miles Davis	E.S.P.	Tony Williams
Miles Davis	Miles Smiles	Tony Williams
Miles Davis	Miles In The Sky	Tony Williams
Miles Davis	Kind Of Blue	Jimmy Cobb
Tony Williams	Emergency!	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Turn It Over	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Believe It	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Ego	Tony Williams
Tony Williams	Million Dollar Legs	Tony Williams
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you can learn to play a Swiss triplet between the snare and the tom. But do you really hear why he did that? Do you hear the sound? Can you imagine in your head what he was going for? Can you hear why he played that in the part of song that he played it in? Do you understand the form of that song? Perhaps that worked because of what Wayne Shorter played, or what Miles played. Why would he do that? Tony wasn't stupid; he was a genius.

MD: So you analyzed why and where he played what he did?

Cindy: Of course. Tony didn't throw something out for no reason. It was musical. You can't play like that without intelligence. Bird [Charlie Parker] and Dizzy [Gillespie] were intelligent. They were thinking about it; they were incredible improvisers, they were creators on the spot. When I say intelligent I mean that what they were doing didn't just come out of some lame movement of fingers. They didn't luck up on it. They knew what they were doing.

Assembling A Language

MD: So how did you turn all of that into a personal language?

Cindy: When I came to New York in 1982, I was befriended by Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Arthur Taylor, and Max Roach. All those guys were kicking. And all the musicians who were here were able to absorb that. In 1982 we couldn't see Bach, but we could see Miles and Dizzy and Sonny Rollins.

MD: What did hearing and seeing those musicians in the flesh give you?

Cindy: I was able to absorb some of their energy and their vibe. Not only was I watching Art Blakey play, I would hang out with him. I even babysat his kids. You soak up a whole other thing when you do that.

MD: Did you isolate certain elements of Tony's style?

Cindy: I would play just my ride cymbal for a while, working on the feel and the sound. I'd work on my cymbal touch. I would isolate every limb as well as the phrases that Tony played. I might take a single-stroke roll, for example. The way he played the singles on the beginning of the title track from Emergency! or the way he played the singles on "What You Do To Me" from Million Dollar Legs.... I would isolate that and try to reproduce the sound and the feel, and really make the strokes sound as his did. Or I would concentrate solely on the sock cymbal and try to get his feel.

MD: That pumping motion?

Cindy: Tony innovated so much with the sock cymbal. He wouldn't play it at all, or he would play it on all fours, or he would syncopate it or play it on 2 and 4, or 2 and 3. I took all of that and worked on it.

I'll play the sock and bass drum together just doing combinations that he played, and I won't play anything else. I want to get that sound below and build. I break down his stuff, and if it's not feeling right, I break it down even further.

MD: How do you break down something like Tony's hi-hat approach?

Cindy: If it doesn't feel right playing it as 8th notes, I'll play it as quarter notes. Or I'll play it as whole notes until I can get it feeling right. Or I'll work on that sloshy open hi-hat pulse, which is done with the foot. It's the way you move the foot on the pedal. I can't divulge everything I'm doing! That took a long time to perfect and to be able to do it at will.

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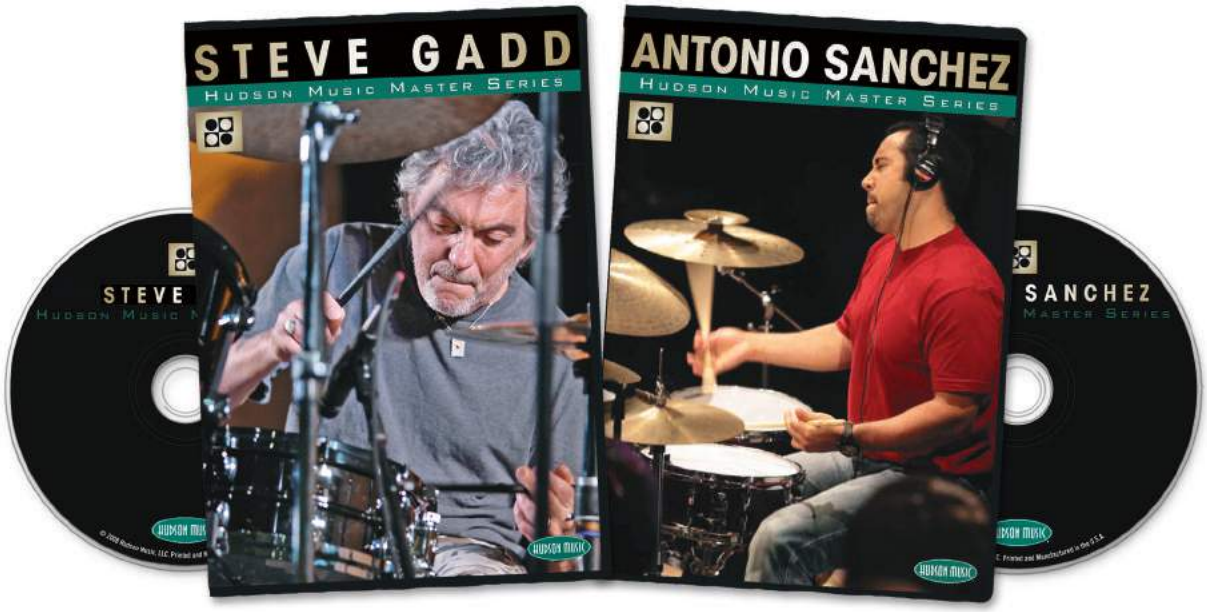

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CINDY BLACKMAN

Left-Hand Lightning

MD: Playing live, you display incredible left-hand technique. Some of the phrases you played at the Jazz Standard were entirely projected from your left hand—endless strings of left-hand 16th notes, for example.

Cindy: I like to treat my left hand like it's my lead hand. I do rudiments and exercises that turn around so each hand gets to take the lead. I play things straight, and then I play accents after. Tony said that if you start out playing everything with an accent, then you can delude yourself into thinking that you're fast. I don't begin a phrase or idea with accents when I'm practicing. I play everything straight and even. And then I add accents after I have it down. You don't want to start playing a rudiment with accents and think you can play it fast. It's an auditory illusion.

For my left hand, I would make up exercises from Tony or Philly Joe Jones phrases. I would play at a tempo, going from 8ths to 16ths to 32nds with the left hand, while playing a ride pattern and keeping time with my sock cymbal and maybe 4/4 on the bass drum. I did that for a long time.

MD: Some drummers playing traditional grip keep the top two fingers closed over the left stick. But your top two fingers are almost parallel with your lower two, a very loose approach. Is there more focus on the fulcrum with that looser grip?

Cindy: Yes, but I'm also playing what I think is Tony's technique. Tony wasn't relying on bounce. His hands actually played the stroke. The stick rests on the first joint of the ring finger, and then the middle and index fingers are on the stick for control. If the two fingers are wrapped too closely on the sticks, it doesn't give you enough liberty. It won't let you play the sticks [high off the head].

I practice my strokes in front of a mirror on a pad with a metronome. Playing whole notes, I'll bring my stroke up on each hand at a 90° angle. What I want to develop is a big swing. That helps me with speed, and it helps the sound too, because I'm able to pull the sound out of the drum. I'm actually putting the stick down, not letting gravity control me. I tell my students to put the stick down and then pick the stick up. I don't rely on gravity, and there's hardly any rebound at all. I'm playing the strokes.

MD: Are you using Moeller technique?

Cindy: People ask me if I've studied different techniques. I'm doing Tony's technique. He played every stroke. I heard him say that in a clinic. He felt that if he relied on bounce, then he wouldn't be sure if he was going to be able to play something. From what he said I surmised that these are the reasons he played every stroke.

MD: On the Music For The New Millennium album cover, your left hand is holding the stick at a high angle, between 45° and 90°. But at the Jazz Standard your left hand was alternately very low in relation to the snare, almost parallel at times. Different heights for different sounds?

Cindy: It moves depending on what I'm doing. If I'm playing a single-stroke roll and the sticks are coming up high, then my hands will be in a different position than when I'm comping. It all depends on what I'm playing. I'm really trying to play correctly all the time.

I have a set position that I know is the start point. Then I go from there. I use that as my reset button. I want to play in a linear fashion, which is what I got from Tony, Philly Joe, and Max. It doesn't take up a lot of space. You're directing your energies. For instance, a stroke on a cymbal is very linear. It's very direct, and that's how they got that sound as well.

Smacking Phrases

MD: You play a lot of full-set phrases. How do you do that and not detract from the time? Can you offer advice on comping while maintaining the pulse?

Cindy: The pulse is in your head. When you're playing something on the kit, you're still playing in time and still playing around the time, depending on what you're doing. Hear the pulse in your head and then play around it. The whole kit, in essence, is metronomic. You never leave the pulse just because you go to another part of the instrument. You're still maintaining the pulse.

MD: But for a younger player who might be attracted to flash and might not have the maturity to maintain the pulse, how would they focus on keeping the time in check while phrasing and responding?

Cindy: If they're practicing by themselves, they should work with a metronome and play time with it and also play phrases

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against it. But when you' re in the music and playing a lick, you can' t forget that there' s a pulse and a feel. Don' t just play a lick, play it in time so it feels good. Play it as though you' re still playing a groove. If you' re playing [sings a funk backbeat with fills], I' m still hearing the beat against the fills. There' s no secret other than working with a metronome, playing with phrases, and working on your listening skills. A lot of drummers don' t work on that. We as drummers need to get with a chordal instrument.

MD: You play piano, right?

Cindy: I use it to write with, but I don' t say I play piano. I use it as a tool to hear harmonies and chord progressions. As drummers, we need a chordal instrument in our psyche so we can hear melody and where the turnarounds are. That' s a good exercise: Play a groove, and at the end, where there' s a turnaround, play your fill but don' t lose the pocket. Do eight-, sixteen-, and thirty-two-bar phrases. Then play around with different forms. Or skip a turnaround. Sing a song in your head or have a metronome going, and don' t play the pocket. Sing the pocket in your head and then only play the fills when you get to the turnaround, and see if you' re in time.

Bass Drum Domination

MD: You often play " bass drum lead" rather than purely ride cymbal lead. Tony Williams did the same thing. There are long rhythms off the bass drum driving the pulse with the cymbal.

Cindy: Tony brought that to the fore. Kenny Clarke was really the one to break away from playing four on the bass drum; he began playing accents. After that all the drummers began to expand on that. Then Tony took it to a whole other level.

To me, it' s about treating your right foot as if it' s another hand. You' re making the bass drum part of your comping statement, the same as your snare drum. They' re on equal footing. In terms of where you place the bass drum, it has the same importance as the left hand, and that brings it to the forefront.

Flam Attacks

MD: When you play fast flams in a row, are they one-sided or alternating?

Cindy: It depends on the sound that I want. I do both. Each one sounds different. Often I play consecutive flams in a row, one-sided, because that' s a really smooth sound. When I want variation, then I alternate. Flams are difficult to play. Drummers think they' re playing flams when they actually sound more like double stops. Flams have a degree of difficulty in getting them to sound clear and making them swing.

MD: How do you typically play flam combinations between snare and tom? Will you lead with a left or right flam?

Cindy: It depends on the combination. I' m hearing a sound. The technique becomes a sound rather than something I think about. I' m trying to get to that level. I' m not saying I' m there yet, but that' s the level I' m aiming for.

Her Regimen, His Ritual

MD: You have a beautiful touch…" glistening" is a good word for it. Was there a time when you focused on your touch and your sound?

Cindy: Oh, yeah, and I still do. But I don' t analyze it when I' m playing. I always want to check that I' m bringing the best sound out of the drums that I can. I practice things very softly. I can' t play loud in my apart-

ment, so I' ll play under the volume of my stereo. Nobody can kick me out of here, but they will complain. I try to practice at a level where nobody complains. If they do complain, then I didn' t play it right. I like the challenge of practicing really softly. That helps your touch. I do that often.

MD: What are you practicing currently?

Cindy: Independence and hand technique. I practice rudiments and phrases in different ways. Let' s say I' m hearing a certain phrase; I' ll play it in different ways around the kit. I' ll also play the phrase between my hands and feet. And then I' ll add accents to the phrase. I' ll take a phrase and add rudiments to it in different spots, maybe adding one rudiment or two or three. Then in that space I might play 16th or 32nd notes. That helps technique, dexterity, and flow, and it helps you think creatively.

I' ll also play the phrase with different dynamics and with different dynamics on different limbs. I might play the snare drum part quiet and the bass drum loud, or vice versa. I raise and lower the different limbs, which helps control. So you' ve worked on concept, coordination, technique, control, fluidity, and creativity, all with one phrase.

MD: Do you practice purely on snare drum as well?

Cindy: For a jazz drummer, the snare drum is key. Philly Joe Jones is on the snare drum like it' s his wife! In fife & drum corps, we had to play rudiments from a dirge to top speed. The drum line master would put his hands over your sticks and you had to play at whatever height that was, no matter what the tempo of the piece was.

MD: You studied with Alan Dawson briefly. What did he teach you?

Cindy: I was already playing professionally at that point, right after Berklee in 1982. We studied out of Syncopation, and for technique he gave me his Ritual, which is very hard. It kicks your butt! The Ritual is eleven pages of different rudiments that repeat. You play them while keeping time with your feet. He played a samba rhythm under it. I might play triplets on my bass drum.

The Greatest Drummer Ever?

MD: What' s the way forward for you?

Cindy: My group will record again. I want to focus on developing a band sound in addition to what I do on the drums. The reason for doing all these things on the drums is simply to be able to bring it all to the music. I want to further the band sound. And I might do some other gigs as well.

Lenny' s situation worked out because I liked his music, and we had some time off. That meant I could get back to my music.

MD: You once said that you' ve experienced several forms of prejudice: racial, gender-based, and even prejudice against your opinions. What opinions aroused prejudice?

Cindy: It could be my love of Tony Williams. I think Tony is the greatest drummer that I' ve ever heard. But some people don' t think Tony is the greatest drummer. That' s fine, I don' t care. But when I make a statement I sound strong, so people think I' m trying to tell them how it should be for them. I' m not, but I do think Tony is the greatest drummer who ever walked the planet, and I' ll show you why. I' ll play it for you, and I' ll play him playing it for you. And eventually, if you try to play it, you' ll see why.

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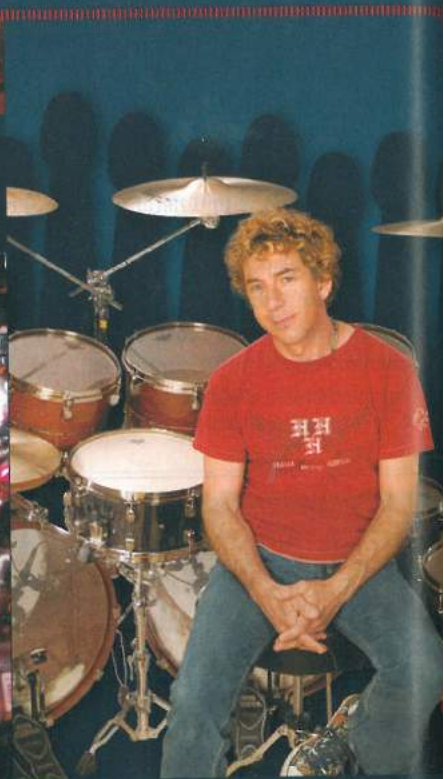

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TESTAMENT'S PAUL BOSTAPH

METAL RISK TAKER

Story by Waleed Rashidi
Photos by Jay Blakesberg

Slayer, Testament, Exodus, Systematic, Forbidden: Over the past couple of decades, drummer Paul Bostaph's résumé reads like a "wish list" of heavy rock, metal, and thrash acts. But it's really no surprise that this Bay Area–based one-man demolition crew has been able to land such an outstanding host of heavy gigs.

Bostaph spent his formative years in the late '80s and early '90s with Forbidden. It was his first successful venture in the music industry, and was immediately followed by his lengthy stint in Slayer, his highest-profile gig to date. Bostaph dutifully—and impressively—replaced the mighty Dave Lombardo, touring with the veteran act for several years and even recording five highly regarded Slayer full-lengths, 1994's *Divine Intervention*, 1995's *Live Intrusion*, 1996's *Undisputed Attitude*, 1998's *Diabolus In Musica*, and 2001's *God Hates Us All*.

PAISTE
2002
SWEDISH
69

Since leaving Slayer, Bostaph has consistently maintained his monstrous stance in the metallic drumming niche, thanks in large part to his amazing kit agility, furious speed, and excellent attitude. His recordings with bands Systematic and Exodus are additional proof of a career that has continued to plow forward.

And this year is proving to be no different, as it finds Bostaph re-joining thrashers Testament and performing on their first new album in nine years, *The Formation Of Damnation*. It's interesting to note that Testament has had its share of well-known metal drummers on the throne, including John Tempesta, Gene Hoglan, and the aforementioned Lombardo, who performed on the band's 1999 release, *The Gathering*.

Recorded at the legendary Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California with producer Andy Sneap, *The Formation Of Damnation* clearly showcases Bostaph's powerful gifts. There's the double bass damage inflicted on "More Than Meets The Eye," as well as the tightly syncopated slams on "The Evil Has Landed," which presents the mature, technically minded, full-throttle metal slamming Bostaph is best known for.

Bostaph credits his success to his willingness to take risks behind the kit—including exploring different styles with other projects. "Taking risks has made me a better drummer," he insists. "Sure, I've fallen flat on my face plenty of times. At times I've learned just how 'metal' I am. But you can't learn to flip the switch to another style unless you're not afraid to jump into the cold water. Some people dip their toes in the pool to check the temperature. But some people go, 'Screw it! I know it's cold, I'm jumping in.' I believe you have to do that to really find out what your strengths—and weaknesses—are."

MD: You played with Testament briefly several years ago. How did they get you back in the band?

Paul: Well, it kind of started with some unfortunate things that happened to their previous drummer, Nick Barker. He had some visa issues, and they wouldn' t let him back in the country. I have no idea what the reason for that was. But they had a week of shows that they' d committed to doing in the United States, and no drummer.

I' ve known everybody in Testament for quite some time, and we' re all from the same San Francisco Bay Area thrash scene, so it' s kind of like family. Every time they' ve had trouble, I' m one of the guys they' ve called. When they found out Nick couldn' t do it, it just so happened that I wasn' t in a band at the time, and I did have the time, so I said, Sure, I' d love to tour with you guys. I think the vibe was really good between all of us. It just felt right.

Most importantly—and unfortunately—at the same time, they weren' t sure what was going to happen with Nick. They wanted to go into pre-production for a new record, but they didn' t know what Nick' s status was going to be. So they asked me if I' d be willing to fill in for him during some of the pre-production process. As that situation developed, they realized that Nick wasn' t going to be able to get into the US in time to do the record. So after speaking with him, they asked me to join the band.

"MODERN METAL DRUMMING DEMANDS THAT YOU PLAY A LOT MORE SYNCOPATED PATTERNS WITH YOUR FEET. I CAN'T APPROACH DOUBLE BASS THE WAY I USED TO."

MD: Talk about making this record.

Paul: The songs were the most important thing. And when we got into the studio to do the drums, we really focused on the drum parts. [Testament guitarist] Eric Peterson, who' s the main songwriter of the band, has a lot of syncopated stuff he likes to do. He almost thinks like a drummer with a guitar in his hands. He likes to have those parts synced up between the guitar and drums, so we did a lot of meeting of the

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minds. He' d have an idea and I' d try to make it work on the drums and make it better. We didn' t waste any time—we were in the studio for ten days, from getting tones to finishing. And I think we got the best results we possibly could, given that amount of time.

MD: How quick are you in the studio? Can you usually knock things out in a couple takes?

Paul: I would love to be that guy. But I' ve got to dot the I' s and cross the T' s. So I' ll go in and do about five takes of a tune. That' s about as many takes as I need. There' s always going to be one take out of all them where the overall body has the fire you' re looking for. From that base, I like to go in and punch in any fills that I feel will help improve the track—that' s what I mean by dotting the I' s and crossing the T' s.

MD: Did you use a click track?

Paul: We did. That' s what the band wanted to do. I think the album still managed to retain a good live feel, and that' s because I' m more comfortable playing to a click track now. I didn' t use a click on any of the Slayer records. Frankly, I prefer not to use it, because I love the pushing and pulling. Come to think of it, there was one song I did with Slayer, a song called " Bloodlines," from the last Slayer record I did, God Hates Us All. It was the first song I ever recorded with a click track. And it needed it, because I was pushing the beat so fast, it was ridiculous.

MD: What kit did you use in the studio?

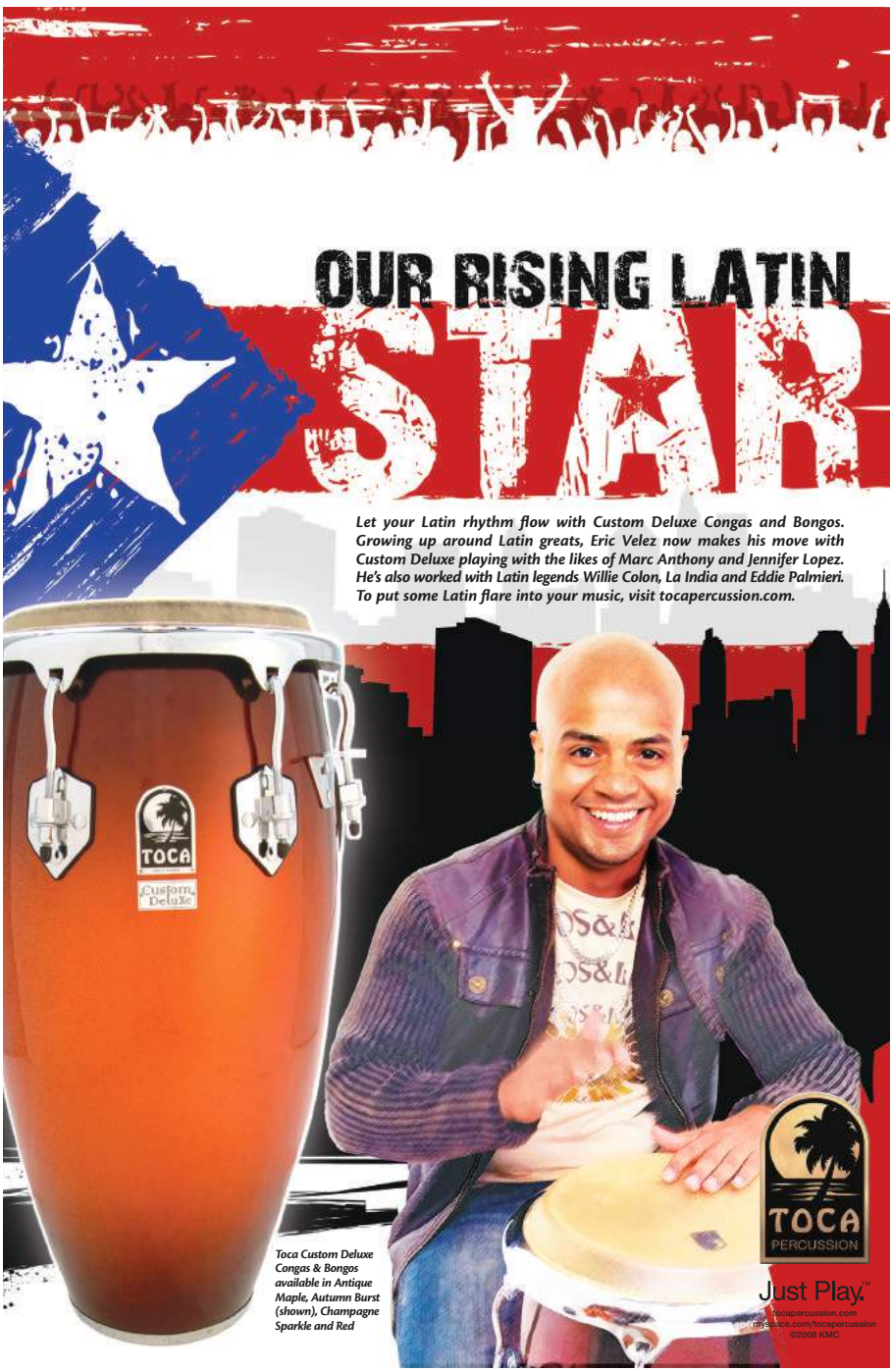
Paul: I' m with Pacific/DW now. We had another brand of kit set up during pre-production, but I didn' t like the sound of it. Then Pacific sent me a kit, I pulled it out of the boxes and started playing, and everybody was like, holy crap, this is the sound for the album. I used the Pacific LX series, with maple shells and shallow sizes.

One of the most important things for me in the studio is my snare drum sound. On this record I used a 5"-deep DW Edge snare with maple inserts. What a phenomenal drum! That said, I still don' t think I' ve gotten my definitive snare drum sound on record yet. I think that' s going to be a never-ending quest for me. On some of my earlier recordings, I don' t think my snare drum sound was very good. But I think this record has some of the best snare drum tones I' ve gotten.

MD: Let' s talk about your playing history.

Paul: Well, pre-Forbidden, I was the guy who was looking for other musicians who didn' t just want to play in the garage. I was a really good athlete, so I was playing a lot of sports. I was the jock that came in the room and played drums. But I love rock

"SOME OF THE PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS WITH TESTAMENT INVOLVED ELEVEN-HOUR DAYS. MY CALVES WERE BURNING."



' n' roll. And before Forbidden, I auditioned for many bands. I was hungry and wanted to make it.

The original drummer in Forbidden was my cousin, and I was " roadie-ing" for him, because I had a van. One evening, a couple of guys from the band came over and we were hanging out. They were telling me that they were going to get rid of my cousin. I was like, " Dude, why?" They were saying his double bass work wasn' t good enough. I said, " Don' t get rid of him. Let me work with him."

So I started working with him and he got better, and they kept him and everything was cool. But a couple of months later, the same conversation happened again. They asked me if I wanted to audition, and I said yes. Now, my cousin was my best friend, so that was a hard thing to do. It really damaged our relationship for a long time. But I kind of knew that, even though it was unfortunate, if I didn' t seize that opportunity at that moment, I' d end up doing something else for a living.

MD: You went on to do a couple of albums with Forbidden, right?

Paul: I did one live record and two studio records.

MD: And all of a sudden, you got a call to replace Dave Lombardo in Slayer?

Paul: Yeah, believe it or not, the day after I left Forbidden, I got a phone call from Slayer. When I left Forbidden, I figured that was it. All the great metal bands had drummers, and I couldn' t see myself starting another metal band. At that moment, I didn' t know what I was going to do. But then Slayer' s manager called, and from what I understand, they didn' t even know I was out of Forbidden, they just happened to call.

Rick [Sales, from Slayer' s management] asked if I' d be interested in coming down, jamming with the band, and filling in for Dave. They had some touring that they were going to do without him. So I said I' d love to, and he asked me how long I needed. I told him to give me twelve days. I was a Slayer fan, so I knew the songs, but knowing the songs and playing them as close as you can to Dave Lombardo—well, I did the best I could. I had to live it, eat it, and breathe it.

So I prepared as best I could, and I went down there for the audition. I played on the drumset for about four and a half hours before the guys even arrived, because I didn' t want to lose my edge. They walked in, we started playing the songs, and I did the best I could.

The last song we did was " Angel Of Death," and there' s a part in the lead section at the end of the song before Dave' s big drum fill where I couldn' t decipher how many cycles the guitar riff was playing. I couldn' t hear it because it was live and I couldn' t count the measures. So I played the song just fine up ' til that part, but then they stopped and looked at me. I was like, " Sorry guys. I didn' t know how long that lead section was." They showed it to me, we counted four, and I nailed the drum fill and finished the song. I thought, well, that went okay. I guess we' ll play for a while longer. But at that point they took off their guitars and handed them to their techs. I thought to myself, Well, I guess I' m not getting the gig.

I got off the kit, and I saw [Slayer bassist] Tom Araya smiling. He looked at me and said, " That' s pretty good, dude." [Slayer guitarists] Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman walked over, but they weren' t smiling.

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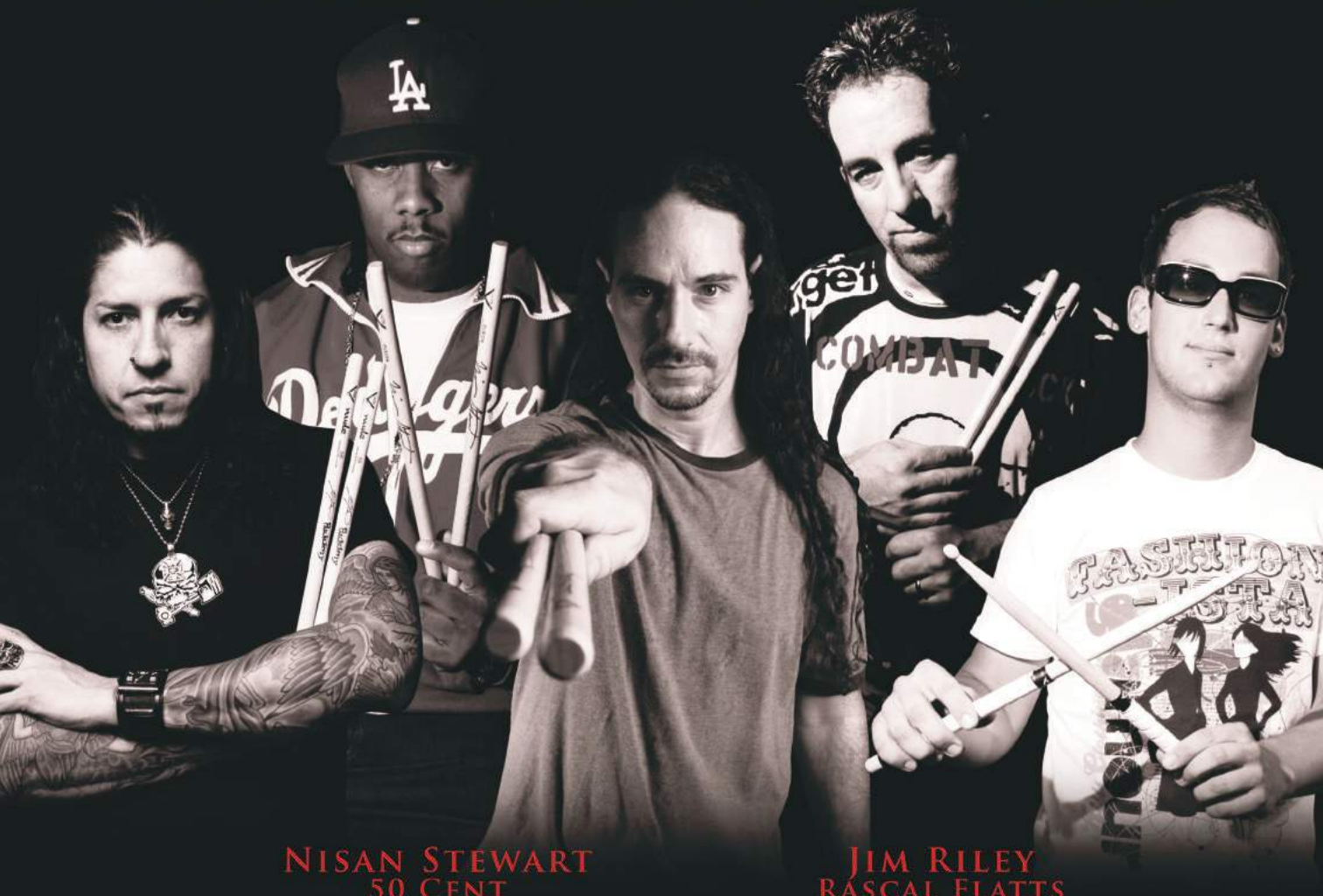

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They did say, "Not bad, man." That's how it got started. I did enough homework to make it as authentic as possible. That won over the guys in the band, and thankfully, later on, the fans.

MD: What were your years like in Slayer?

Paul: They were awesome. I can tell you it was one hell of an education. I went from Forbidden, a band that played clubs, to a band that had sold 750,000 records, arguably one of the biggest heavy metal bands in the world. I had to stay incredibly focused. We played some pretty big festivals. The first one I did with them was for 55,000 people. I had the best of everything in that situation, in my opinion, which I'm grateful for.

MD: Were you always into metal?

Paul: I was into rock 'n' roll and metal, but my favorite band of all time is Electric Light Orchestra. I would love to have played in that band. Jeff Lynne is my favorite songwriter. I've always liked all kinds of music. I love soul. I loved The Commodores. And I loved The Eagles, too.

MD: We've talked about your career, but let's switch gears and talk about your drumming. How do you play at such an intense level and maintain consistency?

Paul: First, you have to stay in cardiovascular shape. I exercise constantly. And I never let myself stay away from the drums for too long. Also, I've been blessed with the fact that I've worked with a lot of touring bands. When you're on the road and touring a lot, your playing level raises up and stays high.

That said, some of the pre-production process with Testament involved eleven-hour days. So in that process, my calves were burning. Your body needs to recover and the muscles need to rejuvenate. You just have to practice constantly.

Over the years, I've learned how to use ankle weights to work on my double bass. I learned that from Gene Hoglan. That's another great thing about touring—you learn great little gems of advice from other musicians on tour.

Bostaph's Best

RECORDINGS

Artist	Album
Forbidden	Twisted Into Form
Slayer	Divine Intervention
Slayer	Undisputed Attitude
Slayer	God Hates Us All
Exodus	Shovel Headed Kill Machine
Testament	The Formation Of Damnation

FAVORITES

Artist	Album	Drummer
Black Sabbath	Black Sabbath	Bill Ward
AC/DC	Powerage	Phil Rudd
Led Zeppelin	Houses Of The Holy	John Bonham
Rainbow	Rising	Cozy Powell
Toto	Toto	Jeff Porcaro
Iron Maiden	Killers	Clive Burr
Iron Maiden	Piece Of Mind	Nicko McBrain

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PAUL BOSTAPH

There' s a company I endorse called Power Wrist Builders, and I recommend their products. I use their aluminum drumsticks, which are balanced for a certain weight, and I use those for warming up and to work out with. Doing that gives me more dexterity, strength, and power in my hands.

I' ve practiced using one-pound wrist weights on my wrists. But you have to be careful. It' s not very heavy, but I' d caution anybody thinking about doing it to start slow and build up. You don' t want to damage your body.

Playing with a metronome is very important, too, especially when you' re working on your double bass chops. If you want to build up your feet, I recommend playing simple patterns for long periods of time. If you do that, you' ll begin to see your speed increase.

MD: How specific are you about your pedal setup?

Paul: I guess I' m a little anal about my pedal adjustments; I check them all the time. I have to. If you' re playing hard and using your pedals a lot, sometimes the adjustments will slip just a little bit. Over the course of a tour, you' ll " adjust" to those changes, but you might develop some bad habits because of it. You might overcompensate. I' ve had that happen. At the beginning of a tour, I' d be playing great without any problems. But then I' d wonder why, in the middle of a tour, I was having trouble playing the same tempos. I found that my pedal adjustments had changed.

Now I take the pedals off the kit, line them up next to each other, and carefully check all of the adjustments, not just the spring tension. I also keep them well lubed with powdered graphite. It' s really important to constantly check and maintain your pedals.

Modern metal drumming demands that you play a lot more syncopated patterns with your feet along with the guitars. I can' t approach double bass the way I used to. I have to be very conscious and aware of what' s going on around me, or I believe my approach will become obsolete. That being said, it' s forced me to experiment more with my pedals and my foot technique. I' ve been changing it up over the course of the year, and at times it hasn' t been a fun ride because in some ways it' s like starting over. But that' s me jumping right into the cold water again.

MD: Metal drumming can be seen as a physical endurance competition. And it seems that sometimes the artistry of metal drumming is being lost, especially with the bpms creeping higher and higher. Do you feel that metal is losing its artistic component?

Paul: I think that some of these kids who are out here now are very, very good at what they do. I think what they' re doing is pushing the envelope, and I believe in pushing the envelope. But I also believe that the faster it gets, the harder it can be for some people to understand the music.

Nothing can replace a stone cold groove—AC/DC, James Brown, Led Zeppelin, Bill Ward in Black Sabbath, Vinnie Paul in Pantera. For these guys, it' s about being heavy and grooving. I don' t think metal is losing anything. I just think metal is doing what it' s always done—evolving.

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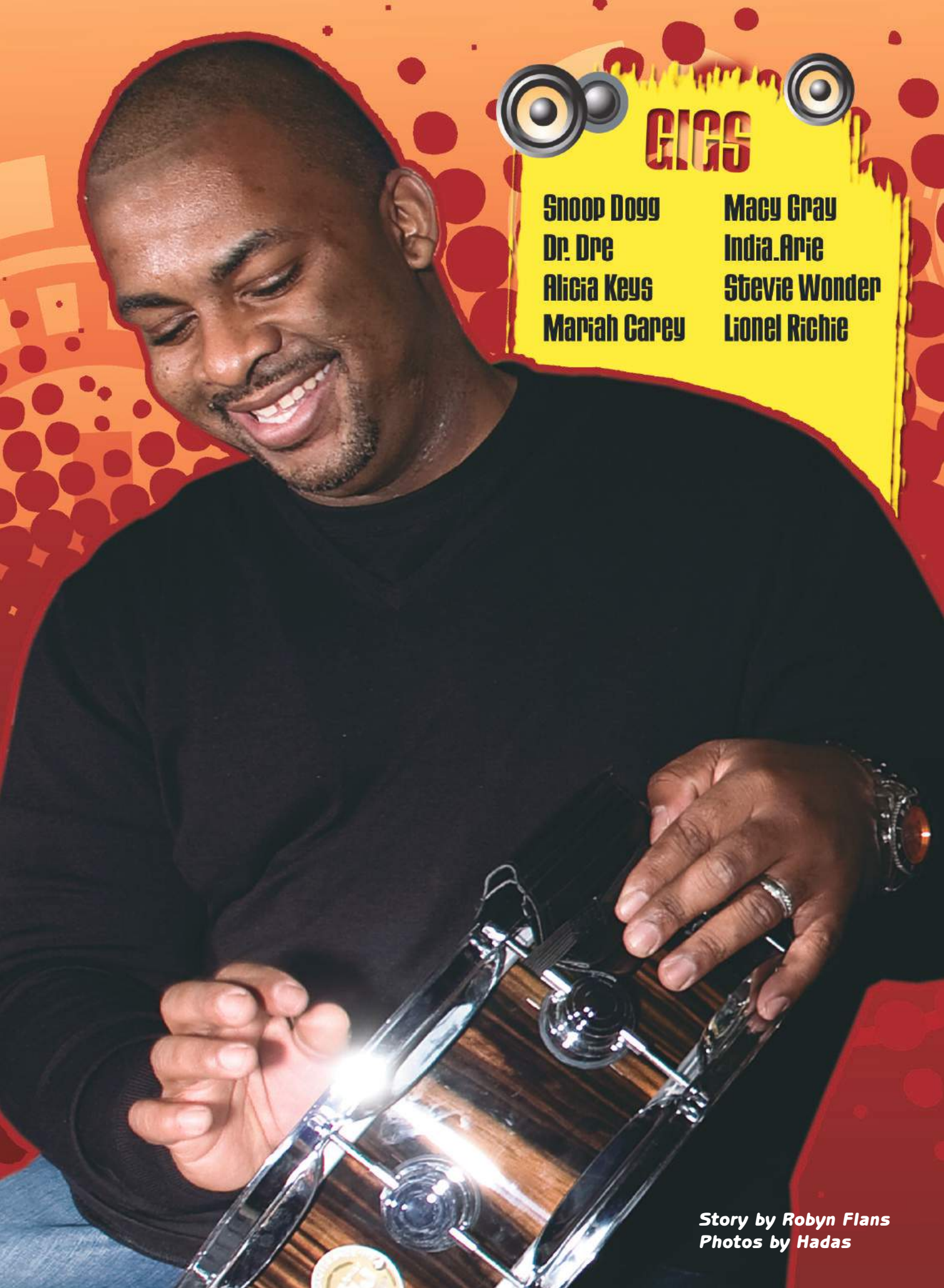
trevor Lawrence Jr.

One Of Hip-Hop's Finest

When you're getting calls from Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre, Alicia Keys, Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, and Stevie Wonder, you've got to know you're doing things right. For Trevor Lawrence Jr., that's been the plan—to be an in-demand session drummer.

Although he grew up in a very musical family—his mom, Lynda Laurence, was a former Supreme, and his dad was a popular tenor saxophonist—with a foundation and promise in jazz, the young Lawrence grappled with where to ultimately take his career. He decided that his love for recording outweighed everything else, and he began his mission to understand and maintain a cutting-edge knowledge of sound and equipment in an ever-changing industry. Lawrence wanted to become a first-call musician, and he's done just that.

No doubt he's somewhere now, playing, producing, writing, and offering himself up as the total musician he has groomed himself to be.



GIGS

Snoop Dogg
Dr. Dre
Alicia Keys
Mariah Carey
Macy Gray
India.Arie
Stevie Wonder
Lionel Richie

Story by Robyn Flans
Photos by Hadas

MD: You grew up in a very musical family. Why did you gravitate toward the drums?
Trevor: My mom is a singer, but she always wanted to be a drummer. She had it documented, literally, before I was born, that her son was going to play drums. She knew it. My wife says that to me about our son, and she' s right on. He' s two, and he has two kits already. He really plays songs. Today, before I left the house, he was playing " Walk The Line."

My dad influenced me in another way; he had me listening to Art Blakey records and all the stuff that started molding me. Then when I was about thirteen, he started putting me in the studio with a click. We had a studio, and he was molding me for the producer/drummer thing. I got that experience early on, so by the time I was eighteen, I was already playing, recording, and doing my first records.
MD: Did you have any lessons or formal training?
Trevor: I studied a few years with Ralph Penland, a jazz guy who played on countless records, and who ended up marrying my mom years later. Other than that, it was pretty much just school and listening to the right music.

That was one of the most important things to me. With most people, no matter what instrument they play, there' s a direct correlation between knowing the history and being a good player. You have to do the research. I love listening to the jazz station and being able to pick out the cats before they say who it is. " That' s Art, that' s Max." I' m nerdy like that.
MD: Jazz was your thing?
Trevor: I started with jazz. I didn' t come from church. It seems like nowadays everyone comes from church, but that' s a recent movement. That' s a great fundamental place to come from, but I came from jazz. For me, it started at Hamilton High School, where Abe Laboriel Jr. and Mike Elizondo

Trevor's Drums

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E. 14x16 floor tom
F. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl
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3. 17" Byzance Extra Dry thin crash
4. 22" Byzance prototype ride
5. 20" Byzance flat ride
6. 18" Byzance Jazz extra thin crash
7. 22" Byzance Jazz China ride

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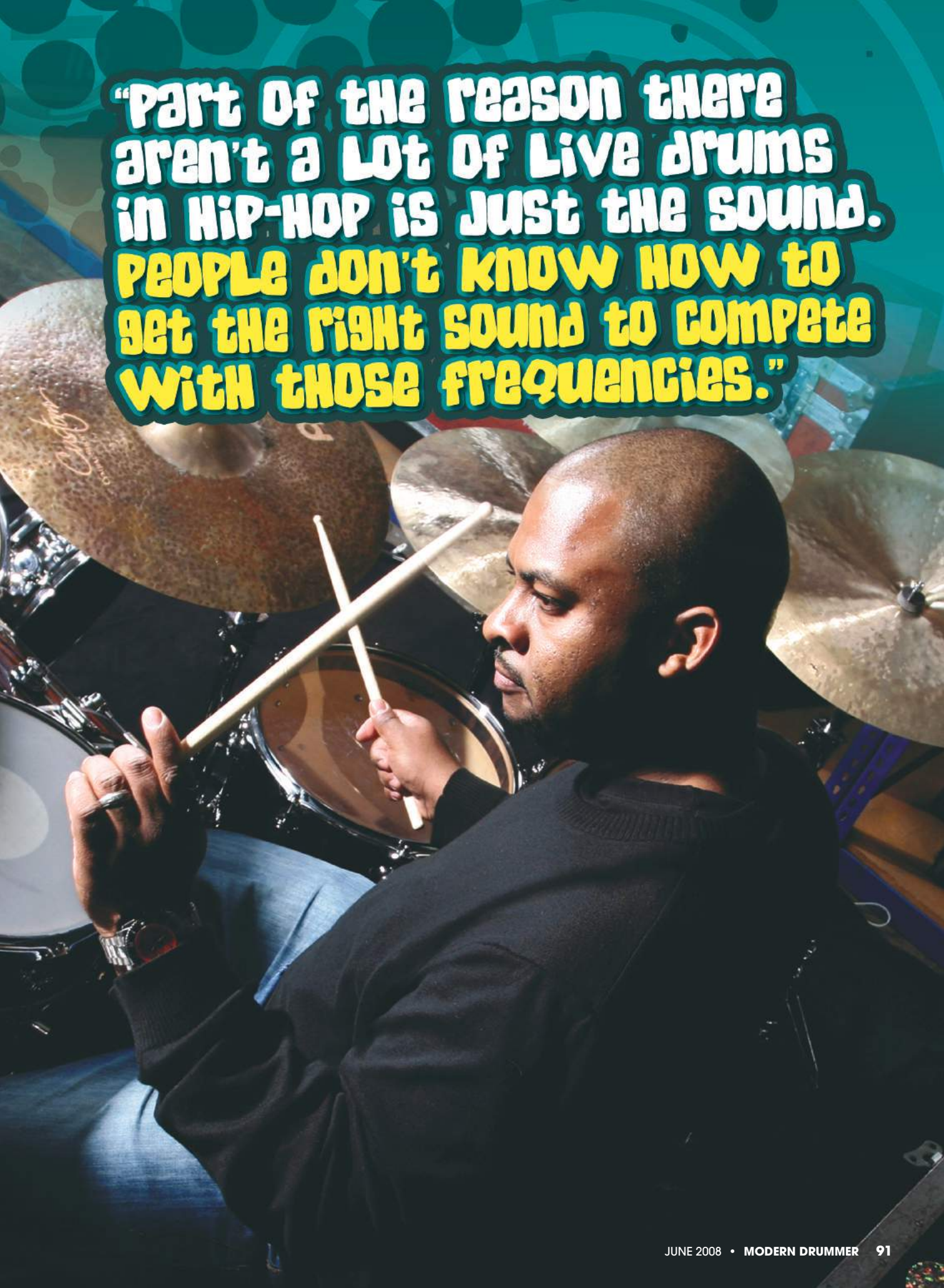
Percussion: Meinl cowbells, Brazilian surdo, repenique
Heads: Remo coated Ambassadors (or coated CS) on snare batters with Ambassadors on snare sides (muffling varies), clear Ambassadors on tops and bottoms of toms (muffling depending on song), Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter with Ebony on front (muffling depending on song)
Sticks: Vater Trevor Lawrence Jr. J2 signature model (hickory with Nude finish)
Electronics: Hart Dynamics pads, Roland TMC-1 and SPD-S, Equation Audio mics and headphones, Aviom monitoring system


"Part of the reason there aren't a lot of live drums in hip-hop is just the sound. People don't know how to get the right sound to compete with those frequencies."

also had gone. I sort of became " the guy" there, won all the awards and scholarships and things. They bussed me in from the Valley. It was a great school back then. That was where I learned my whole big band thing and really honed my reading.

In 1990, when I was fifteen, I had the privilege of playing with Dizzy [Gillespie] at the Monterey Jazz Festival. The school jazz band won a competition, and we had a small group called Second Generation that featured kids whose fathers were all musicians. We would go out on gigs, and Dizzy played with us, which was amazing. When I was a sophomore, that group won Music Fest in Oakland, and I won an outstanding musician award and a $1,500 prize. I even got to have lunch with Lloyd McCausland, who used to work for Remo. I' ve been with Remo for twenty years.

When I was a senior, I won a McDonald' s competition where they chose one person per state for a big band. They sent us to New York and then picked three of us to play in front of the White House and on The Today Show

MD: Those are incredible experiences for a young musician. What got you to that point?

Trevor: I think it was just being around music and doing it non-stop. We were musicians; we really played. Our group got together on the weekends, our parents had studios, and we were always recording and learning about it.

Marla Gibbs had a club called Marla' s Memory Lane. I used to teach her grandson. One of the first places I drove when I got my license was to a gig at Marla' s. And there I got to meet people like [Jefferson Starship violinist] Papa John Creach. We' d open for him. Hank Crawford, too. And I got to hang with Billy Higgins. I was there for all of that, and it was while I was still in high school. That has an effect on you.

Having the background of being a jazz cat, I had to make a decision of either doing the whole " young lion" movement, or staying in LA, making records, and doing popular music. I have both of those desires in me, so that was a thing I struggled with for years. I was in a group called Weapon Of Choice, which was like a Parliament thing, and that' s where I learned a lot about funk and really playing pocket. It was all about the pocket.

This was also where I began to really believe in integrity of sound. I don' t believe that one drumset fits all, just like I don' t

MEINL

believe one bass fits all. When I got my license, I had a Suburban, and I had jazz drums in the car with a suit alongside my Weapon Of Choice drums with my jeans and hip-hop clothes. I' d play a jazz gig or casu-al and then change out of my suit and go rehearse with Weapon Of Choice and pull out the big drums.

I also did a little touring with a group called Black Note. Wynton Marsalis did their deal, and it was sort of a Wynton band clone. There was a jazz boom going on at the time, and I would play with my dad at a jazz coffeehouse every Tuesday night.

Jazz cats have a tendency to be purists and snub their noses [at other styles]. I don' t believe in that. I can play jazz for real. I' m not just a cat who tries to play at it, but a cat who really knows the idiom and really knows the drums, the tuning, and the repertoire. But I can do the other thing too. And this is what I do now.

MD: Where did you go to college?

Trevor: USC. When I was there, there was a guy named John Thomas who used to play lead in the Basie band, and we played all Basie music. I actually played a duet with Louie Bellson there. Then I went to Cal Arts and studied with Joe La Barbara, but then I

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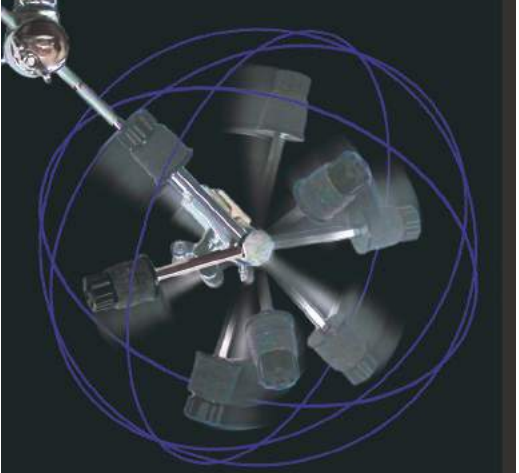

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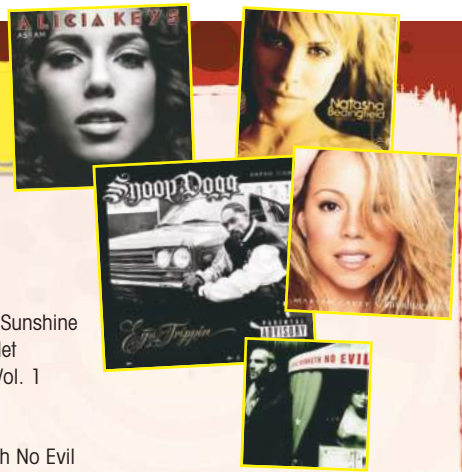


HIS BEST RECORDINGS

ARTIST	ALBUM
Alicia Keys	As I Am
Natasha Bedingfield	N.B.
Natasha Bedingfield	Pocketful Of Sunshine
Mariah Carey	Charmbracelet
India.Arie	Testimony: Vol. 1
Snoop Dogg	Ego Trippin'
Lionel Richie	Just For You
Peter Himmelman	Love Thinketh No Evil

HIS FAVORITES

ARTIST	ALBUM	DRUMMER
Tony Williams	Emergency	Tony Williams
James Brown	Love Power Peace	John "Jabo" Starks
Aretha Franklin	Young, Gifted, And Black	Bernard Purdie
George Duke/Billy Cobham	Cobham Duke Project	Billy Cobham
Slum Village	Fantastic, Vol. 2	J. Dilla
Dr. Dre	Chronic 2001	Dr. Dre
Chick Corea Elektric Band	Beneath The Mask	Dave Weckl
Wynton Marsalis	Black Codes (From The Underground)	Jeff "Tain" Watts

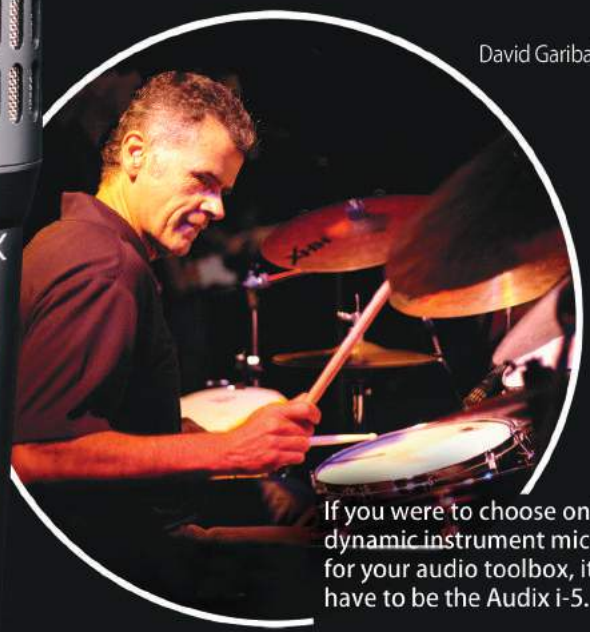
got called to go on my first tour, so I left. I came back when I got back from tour for a while, but eventually I ended up leaving again.

I actually started getting calls to record back when I was still in high school. I got a call to do a record with a percussionist who was with Sting named Vinx.

I did two and a half years at USC and, really, if I had it to do over again, I would not go there. Cal Arts, on the other hand, was very cool—it was a very free atmosphere, very artsy and creative. There were two master drummers from Ghana there, from whom I picked up a few things. Fifteen years later, I went to Ghana with Stevie Wonder. The first thing I said to myself was, "Let me see if it's really true." I asked a woman there what tribe she was from, and I did the rhythmic call, and she did it back to me. I thought, "Wow, that stuff I learned is true."

Oddly enough, a week later, I had to go back to South Africa for a tour with Stanley Clarke. It was crazy. At that point, I pretty much decided I wanted to be a recording

One Mic Hammers the Competition.



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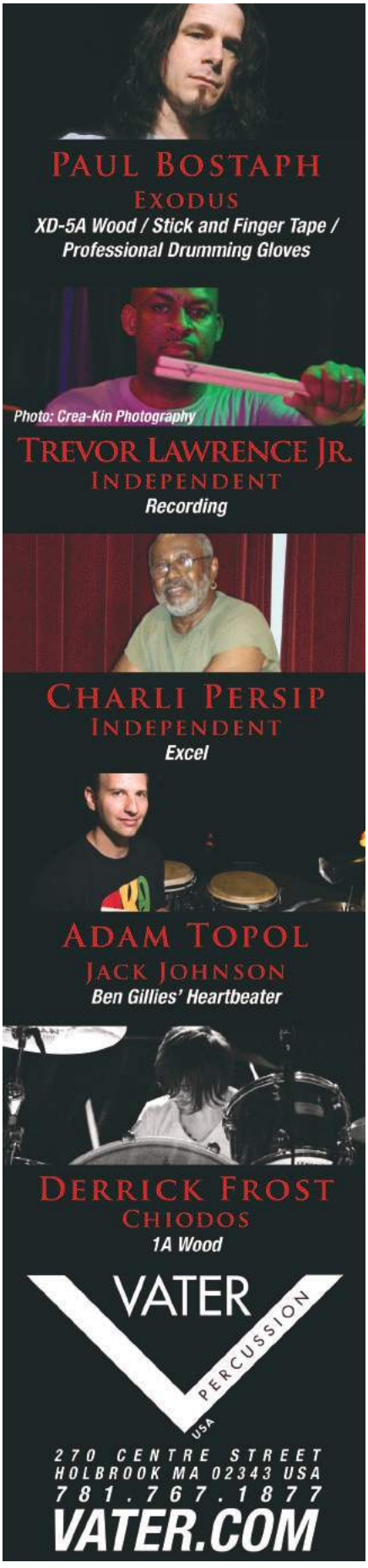


drummer. I had already started amassing drums, knowing that was the game.

The first full record I did was in 1995. It was a folk-rock record for a guy named Peter Himmelman called Love Thinketh No Evil, which is one of my favorite things I've done. That's still one of my favorite sounds I've ever gotten—in a garage studio he had—and some of my favorite songs I've ever played. It also gave me the confidence that I could play other kinds of music. That record even had country music on it.

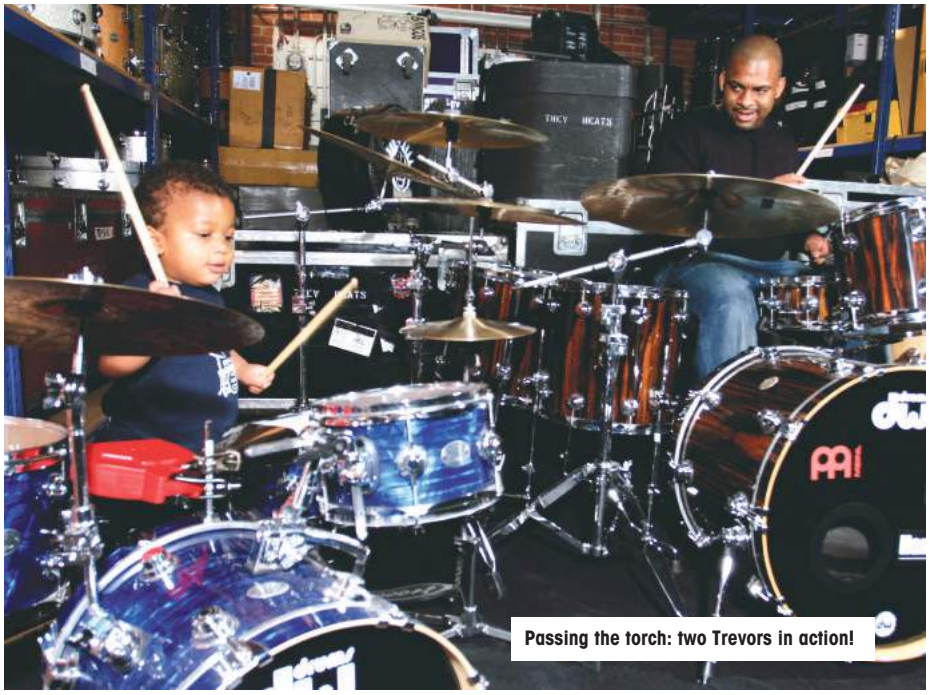
MD: When did you work with Stevie Wonder?

Trevor: I got a call from Stevie in 2004. Both my parents and my uncle worked with him for years. My mom and aunt sang back-up on "Signed, Sealed, Delivered." My dad played sax on "Sir Duke" and every other song on Songs In The Key Of Life. Stevie is my Godfather. On my Web site, there's a picture of him on my grandmother's couch, holding me as a baby.

Anyway, he called in 2004 and said to come down to Wonderlove. So I went down, not knowing what to expect. This guy had equipment like you wouldn't believe, and he was working Pro Tools faster than me! He had a kit there, and he went over to the Rhodes and I went over to the kit, and he played John Coltrane's "Giant Steps." That's his way to test your musicianship—how fast can you play "Giant Steps"? Okay, let's swing. Then it was "Higher Ground" and "Sir Duke." That was on a Saturday. Then that Sunday morning, 2:00 A.M., the phone rings. It's Stevie. "What's up?" "T, I need you to get a keyboard player..we have to go to Africa on Tuesday." On Monday I had to have seven shots [inoculations] and call the keyboard player, and on Tuesday we were flying first-class on KLM. It was crazy.

I played on Stevie's record, A Time To Love, and we did Live 8 in 2006 for a million people in Philadelphia. But the whole time, I had this philosophy that I didn't want to be the guy who was with an artist for twenty years. That's why I like doing records so much. So I took myself out of the Stevie situation. I still call him and talk to him every once in a while, though.

I did a lot of records in 2007, and I toured with Snoop a lot too. I did the Natasha Beddington thing and Alicia Keys' As I Am, and we're starting the next one soon. I'm almost finished with Snoop's next record, and we've done some stuff on it that's going to change the whole game.


Passing the torch: two Trevors in action!

MD: What was touring with Snoop like?

Trevor: It was incredible. It took me back to the Weapon Of Choice days, because his whole thing live is like Parliament. You've got a huge band—two DJs, bass, drums, two keyboard players. All the drums were covered in blue bandana to match his motif. They were created by Scott Rockenfield's company, RockenWraps. Then it was time

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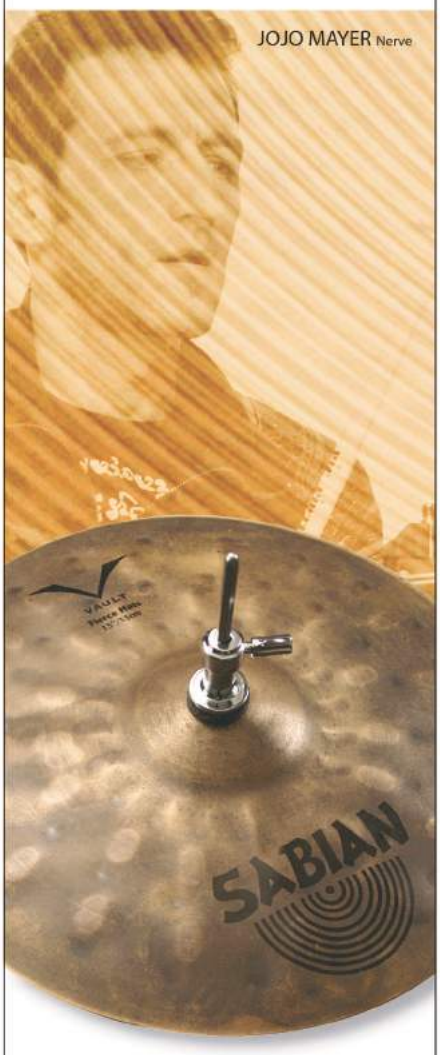

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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

TREVOR LAWRENCE JR.

for the record. Snoop cut a song that is rockabilly, with an upright bass and me playing a cocktail kit with brushes, standing up. A friend of mine, Everlast, from a group called House Of Pain, wrote it. I also played on his album, as did Jim Keltner and Jay Bellerose.

MD: How do you feel about the state of hip-hop drumming today?

Trevor: There's far too much sport drumming going on in the R&B and hip-hop community. It comes out of a very busy tradition of playing. There have been a lot of drummers who have crossed over to commercial success whose roots are in the church, which is great, but sometimes there's a real busy-ness and arrogance in that playing that is very unmusical. It's about, "Look at me, look at all these chops I can fit in, look at all these rolls I'm doing."

Originally, it started from being moved by the spirit and expressing that through the drums. But now it's really just all over the place. It's fine if that works for them, but to me, it's just not that musical, and it's very limiting.

When I was younger, I had my period, like any drummer, of being into Billy Cobham and wanting to do chops and all that. But once I started making records, it changed. Now the thrill is hearing a snare sound that perfectly fits the record.

MD: Let's talk about Dr. Dre and the sounds you're creating.

Trevor: Since this past September, Dre has called a lot. Part of the reason there aren't a lot of live drums in hip-hop is just the sound. People don't know how to get the right sound to compete with the frequencies that you can get from the drum machine.

When Dre called, I wanted to do something different, so it could fit more into the musical picture and wouldn't just be an experience that ended up hitting the cutting-room floor. So what I've been doing these last few times is have them mike the regular acoustic drums, but on top of that, I'll send him additional triggered kick and snare drum sounds. Then I'm able to plug into his drum machine via MIDI, and he can choose additional kick and snare sounds that will also be in the mix. So when I'm playing, you're getting three kicks and snares simultaneously, and that gives him a lot to tweak later.

Dre has sounds now that he would have had on the drum machine, but with my feel. And we cut everything to a click, so it's locked in. He can go back and change all the stuff he puts on top of the drums—all the keyboards and bass—as much as he wants, but he has these patterns now that are not lacking sonically for what he needs to do.

I've also been using the DW "ballad" snare—a 16" snare drum that looks like a floor tom, but that has snare wires. It works perfectly for giving you that old Al Green sound that a lot of these people are sampling. It's an amazing sound for me. I used it on Alicia's record, and I play it on pretty much everything I'm doing right now.

I would like to address the topic of sound in general, because I think it's been overlooked by this generation of drummers, with all the schools and institutions that love taking your money. They're turning out drummers that know stuff that is completely irrelevant. Everybody knows how to play big band, but who ever gets to play a big band gig to pay their bills? I learned the idiom and know it for real, but that's not reality now.

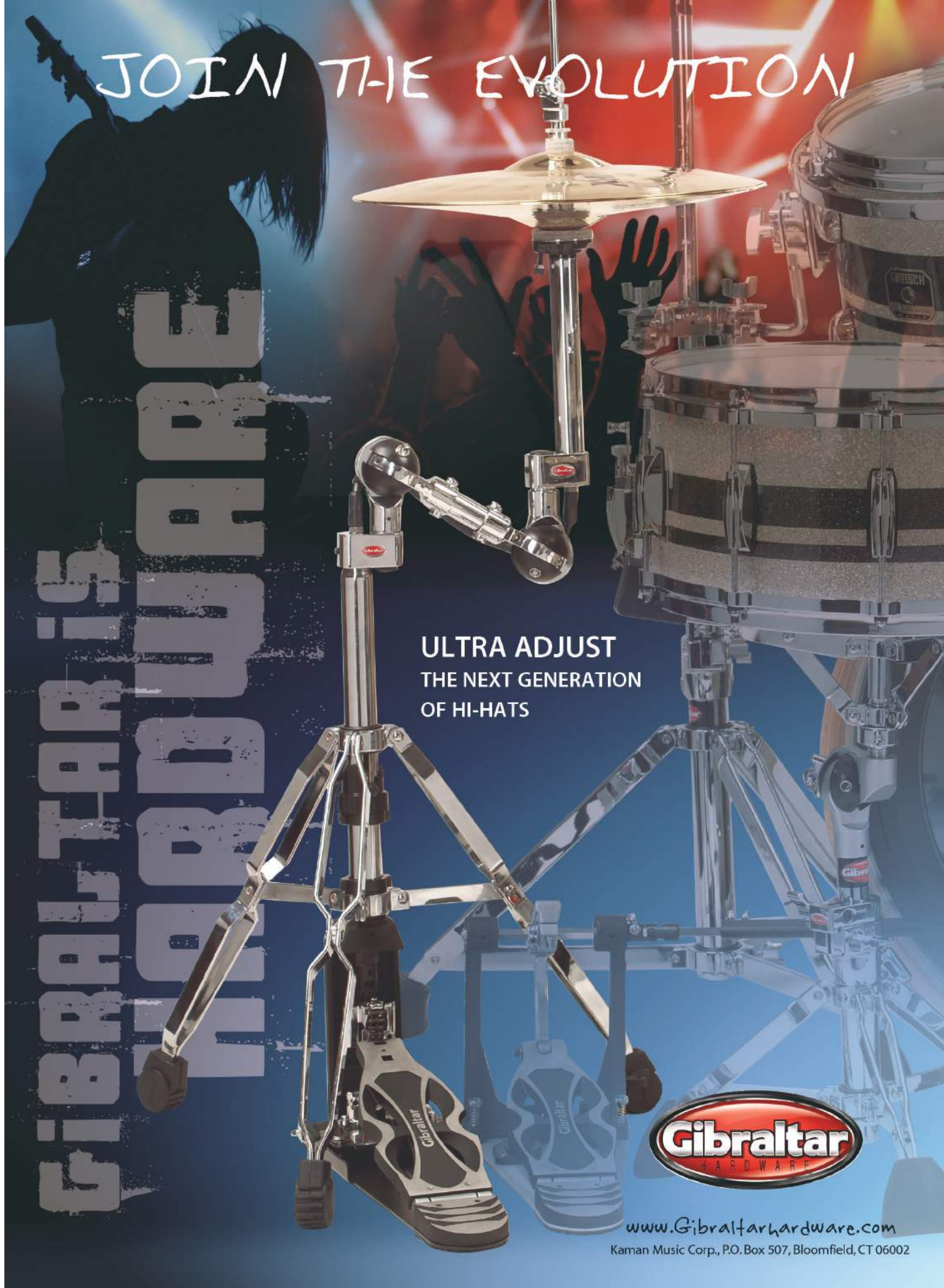
Kids are coming out of school with no idea about a snare sound and no concern about the fact that sound even matters. They think that one sound fits all. You can't have a tight snare drum on every song, and kids don't even realize that matters.

MD: So where are kids supposed to learn this?

Trevor: That's my question. Kids are graduating from these schools and they're calling me asking me how to do Pro Tools or how to fill out an invoice. I'm going to start my own personal recording and drum business master class at my studio. I'm going to take twenty students at a time and, with my engineer, go through the miking of drums, tuning, Pro Tools, Union forms, making invoices, tax forms...and all the stuff you really need to know to do a session. The fact that you get none of that in school is ridiculous. How can you graduate school and not know Pro Tools?

MD: Is there anything else you want to share?

Trevor: I want to say that I have tremendous freedom to do what I do because of my wife, Alicia. Sometimes I get calls late at night or our plans get cancelled at the last minute because of work. We've planned vacations that have had to be changed, holidays have gotten messed up...so many things. She never complains, and she's always in my corner. Without her, what I do would be impossible.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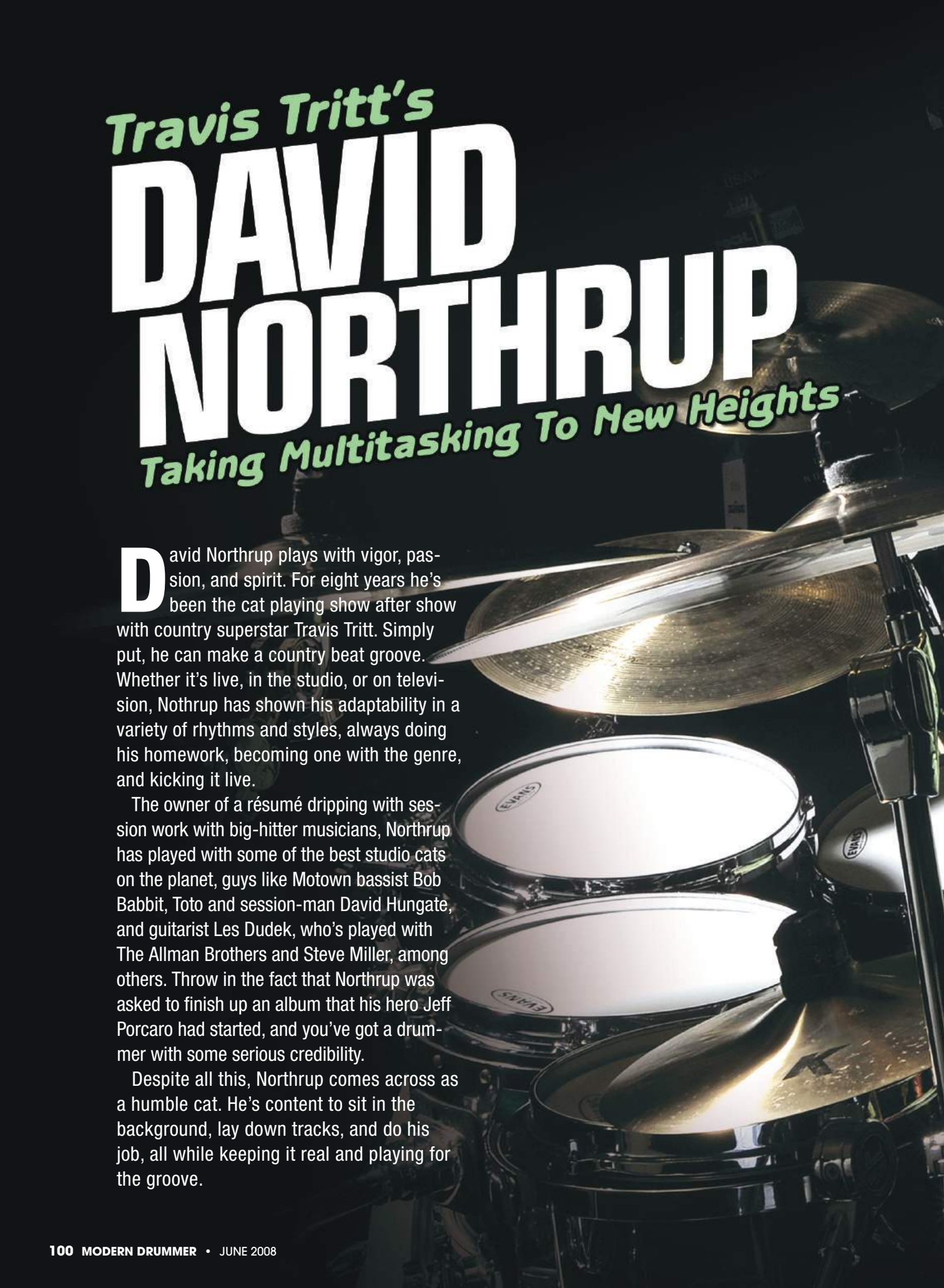
Travis Tritt's DAVID NORTHRUP

Taking Multitasking To New Heights



David Northrup plays with vigor, passion, and spirit. For eight years he's been the cat playing show after show with country superstar Travis Tritt. Simply put, he can make a country beat groove. Whether it's live, in the studio, or on television, Nothrup has shown his adaptability in a variety of rhythms and styles, always doing his homework, becoming one with the genre, and kicking it live.

The owner of a résumé dripping with session work with big-hitter musicians, Northrup has played with some of the best studio cats on the planet, guys like Motown bassist Bob Babbit, Toto and session-man David Hungate, and guitarist Les Dudek, who's played with The Allman Brothers and Steve Miller, among others. Throw in the fact that Northrup was asked to finish up an album that his hero Jeff Porcaro had started, and you've got a drummer with some serious credibility.

Despite all this, Northrup comes across as a humble cat. He's content to sit in the background, lay down tracks, and do his job, all while keeping it real and playing for the groove.

Story by Steven Douglas Losey
Photos by Rick Malkin

MD: How did you develop your style?
David: By basically listening to a lot of different drummers and a lot of different music. I was real fortunate to be exposed to a ton of music at an early age. I' m the youngest of four, so I grew up with a lot of different kinds of music being played all around the house. I really gravitated towards guys who were extremely musical and who always played for the song, like Steve Gadd, Jeff Porcaro, Russ Kunkel, and Carlos Vega.

I remember when I was young, I was intrigued by certain artists like Michael McDonald, Toto, Steely Dan, Queen, and Genesis. If I liked a certain song, I would investigate the album credits to find out who was playing. I became a credits junkie. It' s funny, because I was listening to intricate stuff like Steely Dan way before I played the drums. What drew me to stuff like that was the smorgasbord of drummers—Bernard Purdie, Rick Marotta, and Ed Greene. I listened to so much Ed Greene around my house, because my mom was a big Barry White fan.
MD: What style best reflects your personal groove?
David: I love all styles, but if I had to pick two that I dig playing, it would probably be R&B and pop rock. The drummers I' ve emulated the most, the ones I' ve been drawn to, are definitely from that vein. I enjoy playing that kind of music the most.
MD: How do you best practice playing for the song?
David: By listening and playing with " big ears." Being " song supportive" is what I' ve always believed in and been into. I' m an honest, down-to-earth kind of guy. When I do drum clinics, one of the things I' ve always tried to expose young people to is that it' s incredibly important to play for the song and for the groove. Sometimes that' s overlooked by young players, because they want to be the fastest or they want to display great chops. They want to be involved in drumnastics—the fastest, the quickest, whatever.

Great technique is important, and it shouldn' t be overlooked or downplayed. But it' s not all there is to being a musician. It' s vitally important that younger players realize that ninety percent of what we do is accompaniment. You have to play as " song supportive" as possible. It needs to be the focus of your playing.
MD: Playing for the song means drawing from lots of influences.

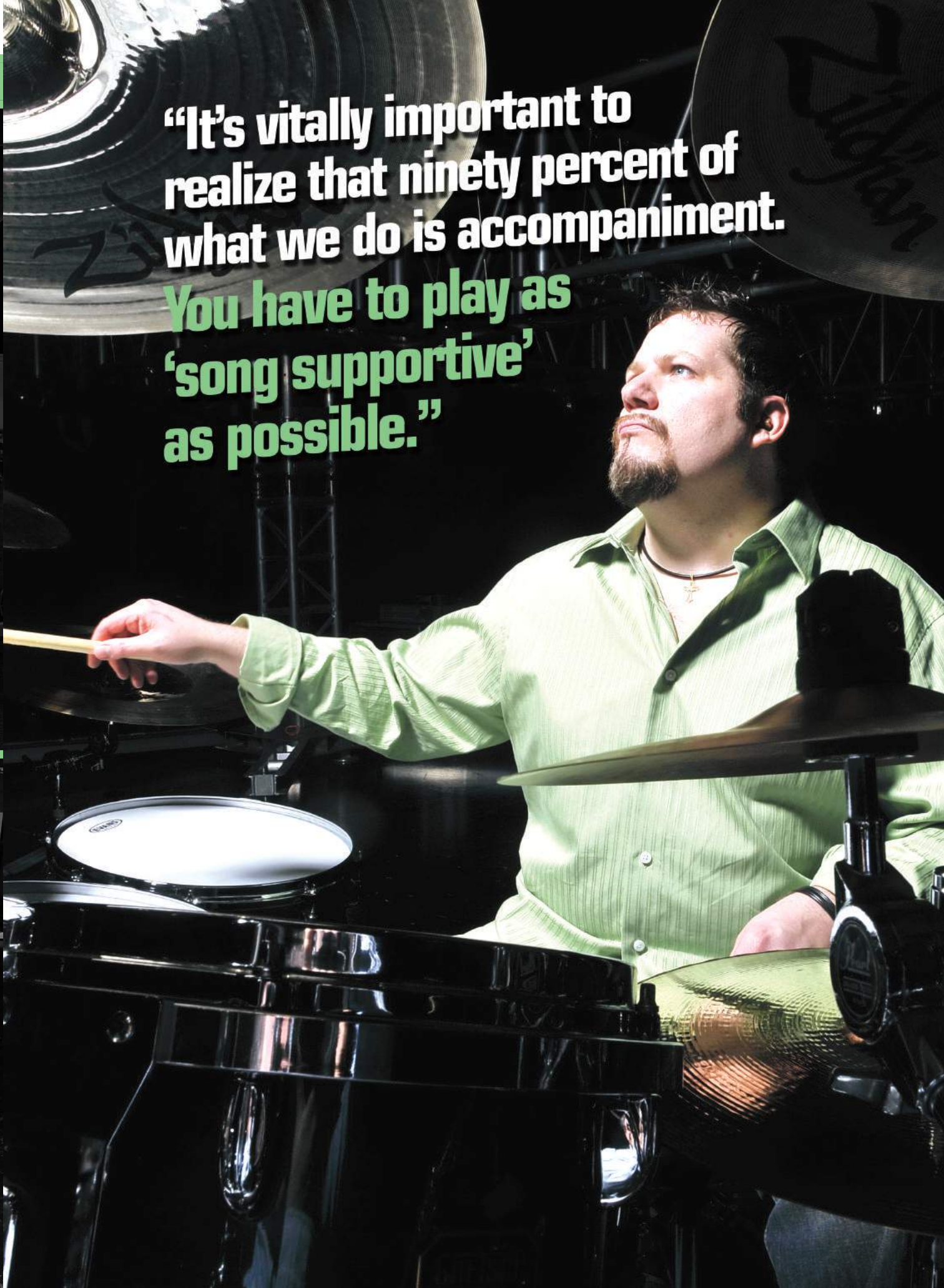
David's Setup

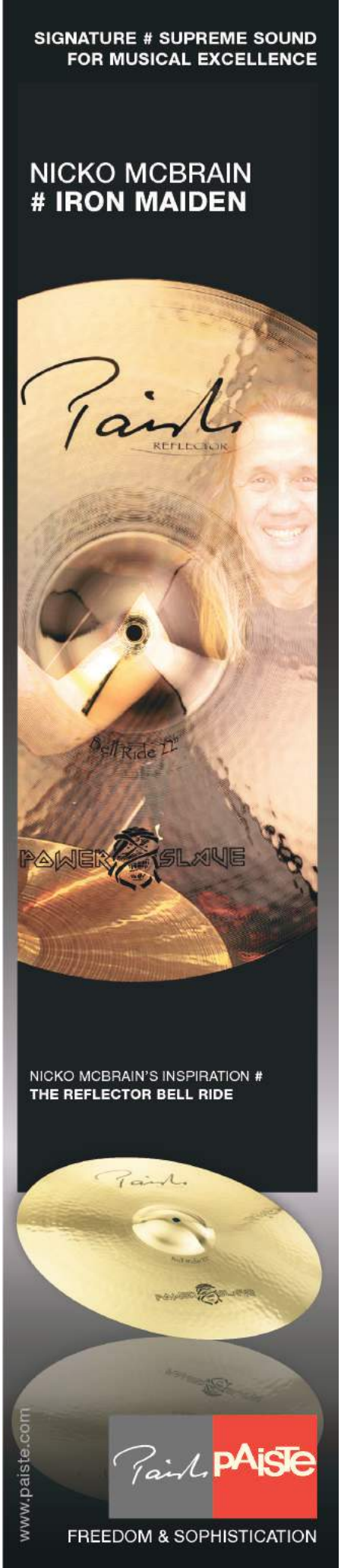
Drums:
Gretsch Custom in Caribbean Blue Burst finish
A. 5x10 Aha auxiliary snare
B. 5x14 maple snare (or chrome-over-brass)
C. 8x10 tom
D. 8x12 tom
E. 9x13 tom
F. 14x14 floor tom
G. 14x16 floor tom
H. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" A Mastersound hi-hats
2. 8" A (or K) splash
3. 10" A (or K) splash
4. 16" A Custom Crash
5. 18" A Custom crash
6. 20" K Custom medium ride
7. 17" A Custom crash
8. 19" K Hybrid China

Electronics: Hart Dynamics, MacBook (equipped with ProTools LE 7.0), Alesis D4 drum module
aa. 8" Acupad TE3 trigger

Hardware: Pearl stands, DW 5000 turbo single bass drum pedal (medium spring tension), Roc-N-Soc throne
Heads: Evans G1 coated snare batter with Hazy 200 snare-side (no muffling), coated G2s live (coated G1s in the studio) on tops of toms with clear G1s underneath (no muffling), EQ3 clear on bass drum batter, EQ3 ebony on front (with 5" offset hole for mic, small pillow touching both heads for muffling)
Sticks: Pro-Mark 747B Super Rock model
Microphones: Shure


"It's vitally important to realize that ninety percent of what we do is accompaniment. You have to play as 'song supportive' as possible."



David: I think so, sometimes. I feel as though I' m somewhat of a versatile player. I play most styles and I have a love for fusion, Latin, and more expressive types of music. It' s real important for any drummer to be incredibly versatile if they want to be a working professional.

MD: How does a drummer get better doing a forty-five-city country tour with Travis Tritt?

David: I really try to capitalize on my time when I' m on the road. There have always been different things that I recognize and work on to better myself. One is just playing with or without the click. On the road I would record myself on a daily basis, just listening for how I would pocket with the bass player and how I might be pocketing with Travis, whether it was his guitar or his vocal phrasing. There are elements of the live performance that you have no control over, but you always have control over your own playing. I would religiously listen to show tapes for how I could improve my live chops.

MD: Do you have freedom live?

David: Travis is not the kind of artist who micromanages. He expects everybody to do their homework and be completely professional. He wants the licks that will be the most musical for each performance. He' s not the kind of guy who wants the same drum fill night after night. He likes consistency mixed with musicality. If you can stretch it and make it a little bit better, that' s cool with him. He' s a player too, and he likes to be pushed. He wants somebody to give a little bit more each night, because that' s what he does as well. The whole band feeds off of that.

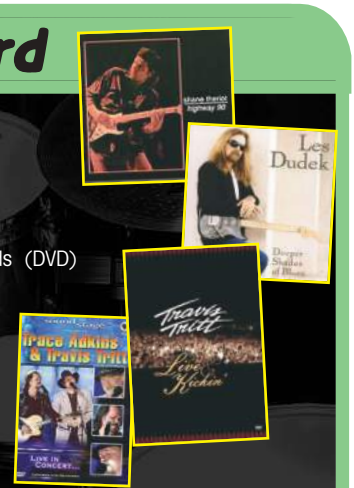
MD: How do you prepare for each show?

David: I' ve been doing this for a long time, but I still take around an hour to mentally prepare for a show. I work rudimentally to warm myself up—doubles, singles, finger technique, and some hand, wrist, and forearm stretches.

MD: What do you do to stretch yourself musically?

David: When I' m on the road, I try to book a few drum clinics along the way. That allows me to show young people what I can do and to try to offer some real-world advice. They see that I can play with Travis Tritt, which is

Northrup On Record



ARTIST	ALBUM
Les Dudek	Deeper Shades Of Blues
Shane Theriot	Highway 90
Shane Theriot	Grease Factor
Andy Gerome	Miles Of Horizon
Disco Biscuits	The Best Of The 2005 Jammy Awards (DVD)
Travis Tritt	Sound Stage (DVD)
Travis Tritt	Live And Kickin' (DVD)
Sean Hogan	The Southern Sessions
Amy Chappell	Kansas
Nicole Frechette	Nicole Frechette
Jo-El Sonnier	L.A. Sessions
Carolyn West	Here I Am

HIS FAVORITES

ARTIST	ALBUM	DRUMMER
Toto	all	Jeff Porcaro
Les Dudek	Deeper Shades Of Blues	Jeff Porcaro
Led Zeppelin	In Through The Out Door	John Bonham
Tower Of Power	Back To Oakland	David Garibaldi
Steely Dan	Aja	Steve Gadd, Bernard Purdie, Ed Greene, Rick Marotta, Ralph Humphrey, Jim Keltner
The Police	all	Stewart Copeland
Steely Dan	The Royal Scam	Bernard Purdie, Rick Marotta
805	Stand In Line	Frank Briggs
Steps Ahead	N.Y.C.	Steve Smith
John Scofield	Blue Matter	Dennis Chambers
Brandon Fields	The Other Side Of The Story	Gregg Bissonette
Sting	Ten Summoner's Tales	Vinnie Colaiuta
James Taylor	James Taylor Live	Carlos Vega
Mike Stern	In Between Lines	Dave Weckl
Little Village	Little Village	Jim Keltner

Plus anything by The Meters, Barry White, Marvin Gaye, Genesis, The Who, The Beatles, Marcus Miller, Stanley Clarke, The Yellowjackets, and Weather Report.

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essentially a southern-rock/country gig with some R&B influence. But that's not all I do. I talk about versatility and I offer tips. I also play along with some tracks from Shane Theriot's CD Highway 90, which I recorded.

Speaking of Shane, when he initially asked me to play on his record, I didn't have much experience with New Orleans grooves, other than working with Jo-El Sonnier, whose music is more Cajun-influenced. He turned me on to the book called New Orleans Jazz And Second Line Drumming by Herlin Riley and Johnny Vidacovich. Shane had certain grooves he wanted me to become familiar with, and that was an opportunity. I did my homework for the session, and I interpreted those New Orleans grooves in a funk-fusion way that best served the song. It was then that my love and respect for New Orleans music and musicians began.

Frankly, I'm not afraid to do the homework or take on the challenge of a different style. I don't get to play a lot of jazz all the time, but I listen to it a lot and play to CDs every chance I get. Those types of things tend to help you with the vibe. I really strive to become musically fulfilled. It's a need, a necessity, a desire to play and be driven. Your musical DNA is made up of more than one genre—at least mine is.

MD: What are the components of being musical?

David: Being a musical cat is everything. I always play with big ears and really listen to what's going on. I try to think like the other musicians I'm working with. It's imperative to think about what the guitarist is doing and what the bass player is doing—and why they're doing it. When you get yourself to a certain proficiency on the drums, then you don't have to pay attention to yourself anymore. Everything we learn—the rudiments, 16th notes, triplets, 8th-note grooves, shuffles—all that stuff is learned in the practice room so it can become second-nature on stage. When we go on the bandstand, we open our ears and listen. We play and react to what's taking place. That ability is incredibly important for all musicians to hone, but especially younger players. All the things you learn early on become a part of your soul, so you don't have to think about them later on when you play. You listen to the other musicians and become reactionary.

MD: So it's not about the chops?

David: No, it's all about groove. Well, I love guys with chops and I always have, but I've never really considered myself one of those cats. I think if someone tells you that you have great chops, that's cool. But the best compliment I've ever received is something like, "That was incredibly musical" or "That was really grooving" or "That felt great." To me, those are the most important things.

MD: What are some special musical moments you've had as a drummer?

David: The first would be the opportunity to play on Les Dudek's album Deeper Shades Of Blues, which took place in 1993, shortly after Jeff Porcaro passed away. Jeff was my

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Steve Ferrone Autograph Model
American Hickory, TX735, Wood-tip

WALLY INGRAM
Stockholm Syndrome
& Sheryl Crow
Various Models

GABE SERBIAN
The Locust
Japanese White Oak,
PW2B, Nylon-tip

DAVE NORTHRUP
Travis Tritt
American Hickory,
TX747B Super Rock, Wood-tip

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absolute hero, and I was heartbroken when he passed. I met Les Dudek when I was playing in a club. He approached me and asked if I' d be interested in finishing up an album that he had in the can. He said he had the record almost complete, but the drummer who had played on all the other tracks was a good friend of his who had recently died. He told me he didn' t want anything detracting from his friend' s sound and feel. When he told me that the other drummer was Jeff Porcaro, I couldn' t even believe it.

MD: That must have been incredible.

David: My first master session was with him, which involved incredible pressure knowing that I had to get the track right if I wanted to appear on the same record next to my hero. It was definitely a God thing. An opportunity like that was too special to be a " right place at the right time" kind of thing. After I knew my track was going to be used, I got a chance to hang out with Les quite a bit in the studio. I was able to sit around while they brought Jeff' s drums up and mixed the stuff, which was a real special moment for me.

MD: Any other musical moments?

David: I had a chance to perform at The Theater At Madison Square Garden in 2005 at the Jammy Awards with a jam band called The Disco Biscuits. I was playing at B.B. King' s in Manhattan with Travis, and it' s a tradition for the Jammys to feature artists from different genres. Initially, The Disco Biscuits contacted Duke Cooper of

What Does David Northrup Bring To The Table?

Travis Tritt (country music superstar)
David Northrup has a tremendous amount of energy and versatility, and it's one of the things that I insist on from anyone in my band. My music runs the gamut from country to rock to rhythm & blues—even a rootsy sort of bluegrass type of thing. You have to be able to literally shift on a moment's notice and do those styles and adapt well.

When we played at the Jammy Awards, I watched Dave from the side of the stage perform on a very intricate piece. It jumped all sorts of time signatures and had to be fifteen minutes long. I've watched him display versatility on stage with me, but that took it up another level. The guys in the Disco Biscuits were blown away by his performance because it wasn't an easy thing to play. The fact that he was able to latch onto that demonstrated his ability to go any way you need him at any time.

Beyond all the great qualities that Dave has as both a human being and a musician, I think the thing I key on the most is the fact that he's capable of change and switching gears at a moment's notice.

Adam Nitti
(bassist for Steven Curtis Chapman, instructor at Victor Wooten's Bass Camp)
David is a drummer who plays with a lot of expressiveness and emotion. Although he has fantastic chops, he knows how to play for the song and makes an effort to intimately connect with it. His energy and positive spirit draw you in and bring out the best in the players around him. He has an emotional, spiritual, and physical sensitivity to life's experiences, and he places that behind every note he plays.

Les Dudek (guitar-great, played on the Allman Brothers' "Ramblin' Man" and "Jessica," toured with The Steve Miller Band, Boz Scaggs, and Cher)
If you read the drum credits on my album covers, you'll find names like Jeff Porcaro, Bill Meeker, Carmine Appice, Tony Williams, and Jim Keltner. The most important attribute that all these great drummers have in common is their undeniable pocket. And if you don't know what a pocket is, you're not playing it, you're playing *at* it. David Northrup brings a solid pocket to the table.

Scotty Simpson (bassist and bandleader for Travis Tritt)
I think the main asset Dave brings is "attention to detail." There's a focused intention behind every beat he plays. He has the ability and facility to go beyond the groove and really capture the spirit of a song rather than just the notes. When we play there's an effortless, unified pocket. It makes playing a song we've played a million times a new emotional performance every time. Even on a simple song, it's the difference between "blah" and "DAMN STRAIGHT!"

Shane Theriot (fusion guitarist, The Neville Brothers)
David brings a combination of groove and technique that is unique. A lot of guys have this, but Dave has a sense of precision that some other drummers lack without losing the "loose" ability to groove. He totally worships Jeff Porcaro, and you can hear that in his playing. Since he's been with Travis, his live energy has definitely carried over into his studio playing.

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Quantum Management to see if Travis would perform with them. Then they asked if I'd be into playing as well, because they were in between drummers. I've always been game for playing different styles of music, and it just so happens that they chose their most difficult song to perform. It was a song that bounced between seven, nine, thirteen, and fifteen—crazy metric modulations. It was like playing an old Genesis song.

When I first saw a video performance of the tune, I thought to myself, "I can't chart this because it has too many changes. There's no music stand big enough!" It was back to the days when I was trying to learn a Rush song or a Yes song, when I just had to memorize each section.

To make it even more difficult, there was a key modulation and metric modulation when Travis came out on the stage while we segued out of the Biscuits' tune into one of Travis's songs, which then meshed back into the Biscuits' tune. We had one rehearsal in New York City the day before the show, and we just went up on stage and winged it. It was cool to pull that off with Phil Lesh and Huey Lewis standing on the side of the stage, just diggin' the performance. It was all about the music that night.

MD: You've really defined diversity for drummers.

David: You have to have a genuine love for music. I love my gig with Travis, and one of the reasons I've been with him for so long is that I love his music. He's got a lot of integrity as an artist, and his music rocks every night. But I'm also lucky that, to feed my musical spirit, I have the chance to stay busy outside of the Travis gig. I guess I make it a priority searching for different opportunities, not only because I love it but because it pushes me.

MD: Speaking of Travis, why don't you play on his records?

David: That's a good question. I've been with Travis since 2000, and he's co-produced all the records in that time. I think if he truly wanted to utilize me, he'd probably just have to say, "Make it so, bring Northrup in and play on some tracks." He's the producer. However, Travis makes great records and the players he's used are guys like Greg Morrow, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Kenny Aronoff, and they've performed incredible tracks. Also, I could be totally wrong on this, but I think Travis is the type of artist who really loves and respects his band. He would not want to discredit anyone in the band by using one or two guys and not the entire group. He's very much that kind of guy.

MD: Even though you haven't appeared on Tritt's records, you do quite a bit of session work. You're even involved with the television program The Session Players. [Check out www.thesessionplayers.com.] What's the key to being a go-to guy in the studio?

David: There are so many important elements to that. There's the obvious: being able to play with a click, being well-versed in many styles, having great-sounding gear,

being able to read, being reliable, having a good feel and great groove….I also think one of the keys is having big ears and really paying attention to the details of the song—the phrasing of the vocals, the dynamic of the different sections—and trying to understand what the producer, writer, or artist is trying to do.

I once read a quote from Vinnie Colaiuta in Modern Drummer that has always stayed with me. He said something like, "Ninety percent of the studio is psychology." You have to know how to read people and deal with different personalities, and also be accommodating. And, of course, you always have to serve the song.

MD: Over the years, what have you learned the most from session work?

David: I'm my own worst critic, and I'm generally not satisfied with my performance. I always feel that I can do better. I think I have a good ear for feel and groove, but there's always a little something I'll hear in a track that'll bug me. If it's not a major issue—if the producer digs it, if the client digs it, if it's musical and captures the essence of the song—then the little thing you're tripping about, you gotta let go.

I like going the extra mile for a client. I love exploring new options for a song and experimenting with different grooves and feels. Sometimes that's cool, but not always. You have to know when to let things go. Studio time is expensive, and most producers expect you to make a good track happen in a reasonable amount of time.

MD: Your drum sound is perfect—totally pro. Please talk about it.

David: I like drums to be full-sounding, round, with good attack and sustain. I'm a big fan of die-cast hoops. I like the focus they give to a drum's tone. I use a combination of Gretsch drums and Evans drumheads, which gives me everything I'm looking for in terms of consistency. I've always tried to emulate Porcaro's sound. When I was working with Les Dudek, I found out that Jeff used Gretsch drums in the studio.

MD: What has helped along the way?

David: As I matured as a player, I realized how important it was to try to develop my own sound. I experimented a lot with different head combinations. I felt like Gretsch was the sound I needed. Their vibe is really the standard for recording, and the cool thing is they translate just as well live. Even though all of their bearing edges are great right out of the box, I've always taken my drums to drum guru Sam Bacco here in Nashville for his expertise in making my edges perfect. I find that little extra effort makes a big difference in the overall tone of the drums.

MD: You mentioned Evans heads.

David: Yes. I look for a big, fat, round, transparent sound for the bass drum. With snare drums I think it's important to find what combination of heads work best for that particular drum. For me, it depends on what the drum's natural tonal character is. Based on that, I decide if I'll use a single-ply coated or a reverse dot on top, or an extra thin clear bottom or a normal-weight clear on the bottom. It all depends on the snare drum.

MD: How about your cymbals?

David: Zildjians are versatile, consistent, and incredibly musical all the time. One of the things I love so much about Zildjians is the endless array of tones and colors they allow any drummer to have. I've always looked for consistency in a particular series, and Zildjians always have that. It's reassuring to know that if I break a 16" A Custom, changing it out with another 16" A Custom doesn't change my sound. I also appreciate that they seem to always be coming up with new and unique sounds. I've been going back and forth between A Customs and K series crash cymbals. With Travis I use the A Custom crashes, but when I record it varies depending on the style of music.

MD: Finally, what matters most to David Northrup?

David: I don't consider myself so much a religious person as a spiritual person. I'd like people to know that I acknowledge God and credit him for where I'm at in my life and in my career. It's all him, not me. I'm just the proud recipient of his blessings. Working hard and making sacrifices is all a part of it. But being still and listening and praying for guidance, that's when things begin to fall into your lap, out of nowhere.

I have an incredible wife and two beautiful children, and I play drums for a living. It's amazing and crazy. That's been my dream from a very early age, almost my entire life, and now I'm in the middle of that dream every day. I truly believe this was and continues to be something God had always intended for my life. It's been a matter of being patient, staying out of my own way, trusting, and letting him open and close the doors. Never stop wishing and never stop dreaming…never!

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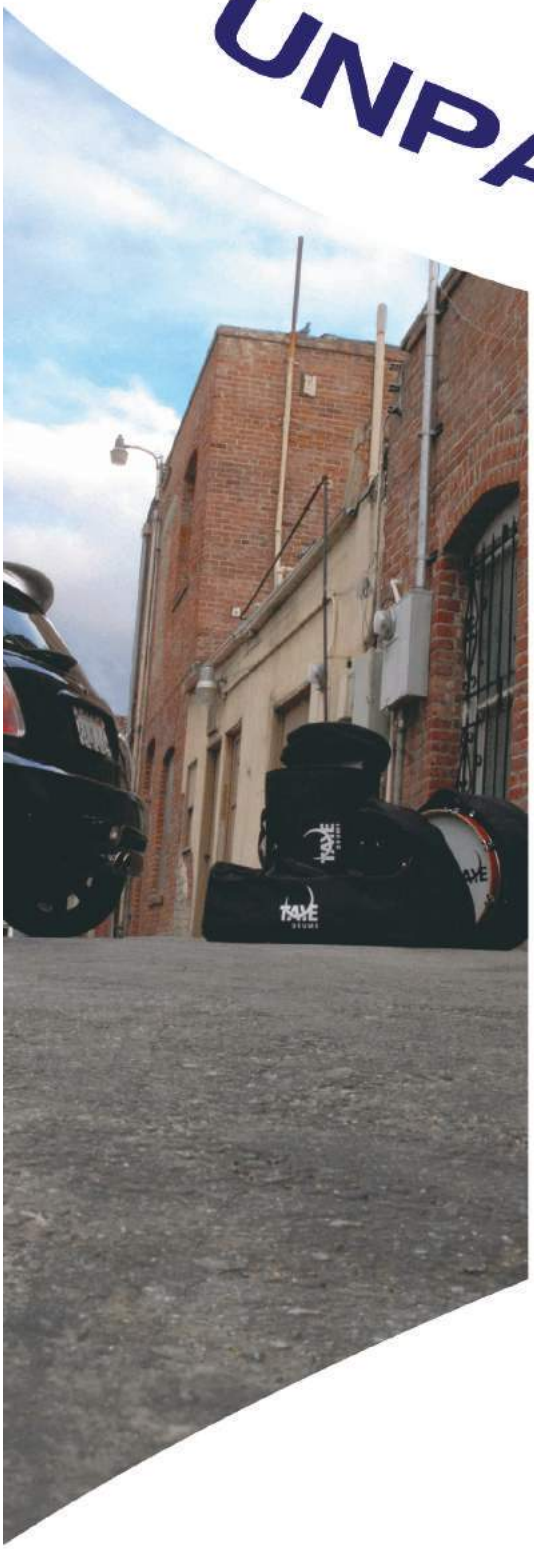

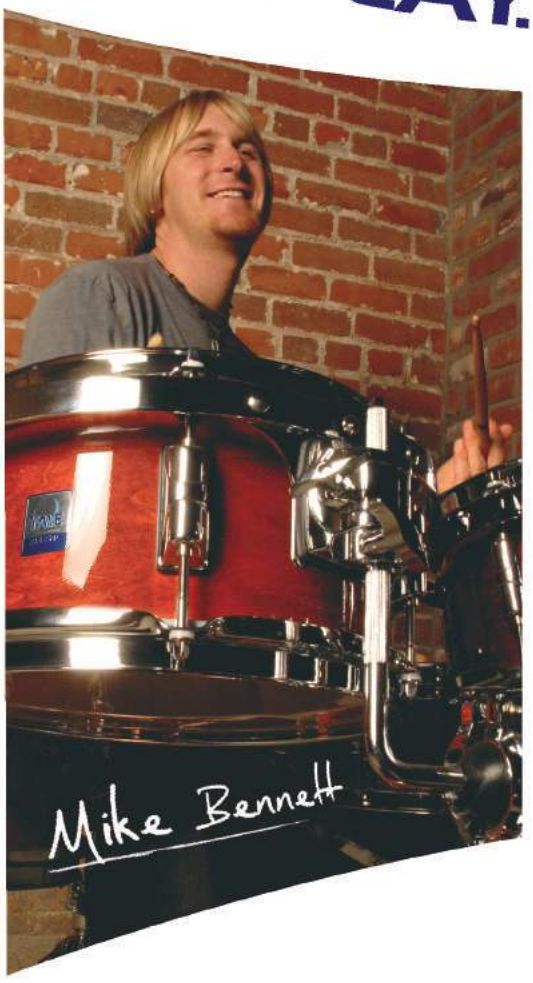

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Travis Barker

Remixing Soulja Boy's "Crank That"

Transcribed by Andy Ziker

Pop/punk drum hero Travis Barker recently posted a video on YouTube of himself recording a remix of hip-hop artist Soulja Boy's hit single "Crank That." This lo-fi homemade clip has created a frenzy on the Internet, racking up over thirteen million viewings.

The original version of "Crank That" features a sparse backing track consisting of a repetitive steel drum melody, cymbal rolls, synthesizer-horn parts, and finger-snap backbeats. Travis's remix contains live drumming, guitar, and bass. The remixed version is available through iTunes.

The YouTube video of Travis recording his drum part for the remix offers a rare view of a top drummer giving maximum effort in the studio. Barker plays with abandon, like a skateboarder from the X-Games. But he manages to lay it down flawlessly. Here's a brief style & analysis that points out several interesting choices in Travis's track.

Cymbal Rolls. Feeding off of the electronic cymbal rolls in the original, Travis layers on some of his own. Notice how he uses small wrist motions during the long roll in measures 3 and 4.

Two-Stick Crash Hits. Travis gives a little more attitude to cymbal accents by hitting one crash with two sticks. He does this in each chorus and sometimes leading into the power-flam tribal section in the verses.

Accenting 16th Notes On The Crash/Ride And Hi-Hat. Throughout each verse and chorus, Travis accents an 8th-note pulse in a stream of right-handed 16th notes. He also strikes the accents on the edge of the cymbal/hi-hat with the shank of the stick while tapping non-accented notes on the cymbal/hi-hat with the tip of the stick (or by "spanking" the stick against the bow of the cymbal).

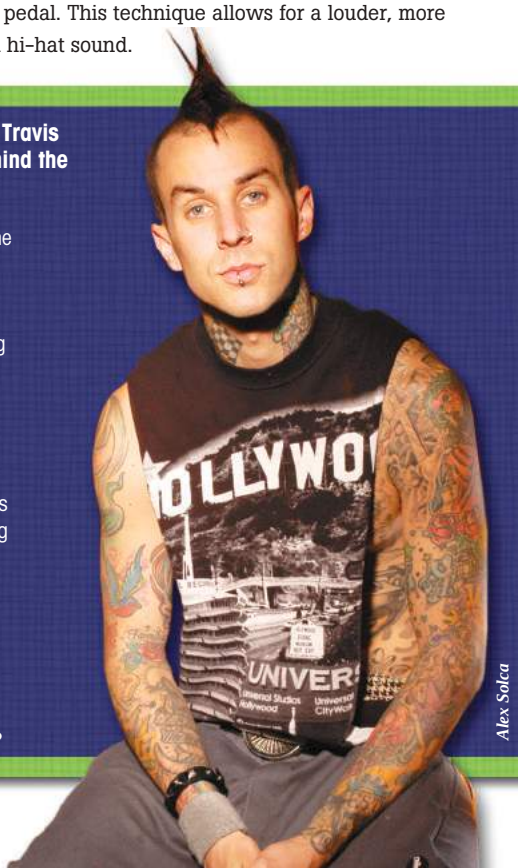
Thematic Fills. Starting in measure 6 and continuing throughout each chorus, Travis uses short bursts of 32nd-note fills at the end of each two-measure phrase.

Unique Hi-Hat Technique. When Travis opens his hi-hat in the verses, he keeps his heel up and lifts his entire foot off the footboard of the pedal. This technique allows for a louder, more aggressive open hi-hat sound.

Crank What?

The following short interview with Travis reveals some of his intentions behind the Soulja Boy "Crank That" remix.

MD: What made you decide to do a remix of "Crank That"?
Travis: I did it for an iTunes release with Interscope Records. I thought the original song lent itself to be flipped because of its minimal instrumentation.
MD: Why did you post the video on YouTube?
Travis: The video shows me actually recording the drums. I thought it would be a good way of announcing that I have a new remix.
MD: Are you using a crash in the video, instead of a ride?
Travis: I often use a Zildjian 21" A Sweet Ride. You can crash/ride on that thing all day long!
MD: Did this remix require a number of takes?
Travis: I nailed it on the second take. I don't like punching in—I prefer nailing it.
MD: How do your unique techniques—crashing one cymbal with two sticks, lifting your entire foot off the hi-hat pedal—play into the vibe of the track?
Travis: I don't think about any of those things; they just happen when I play.
MD: Any warnings for youngsters who are trying to emulate you? Hearing damage? Damage to sticks, cymbals, drumheads, etc.?
Travis: [laughs] Go hard. No rules.
MD: Why do you think this video has become such a phenomenon?
Travis: Hearing the song with guitars and drums creates a different dynamic and offers something new to the listener. Our generation is open to anything.
MD: What would you like to tell all of the up-and-coming drummers out there?
Travis: Express yourself, speak through your instrument, and take it to another level. Kill all boundaries and limitations.



Alex Solca

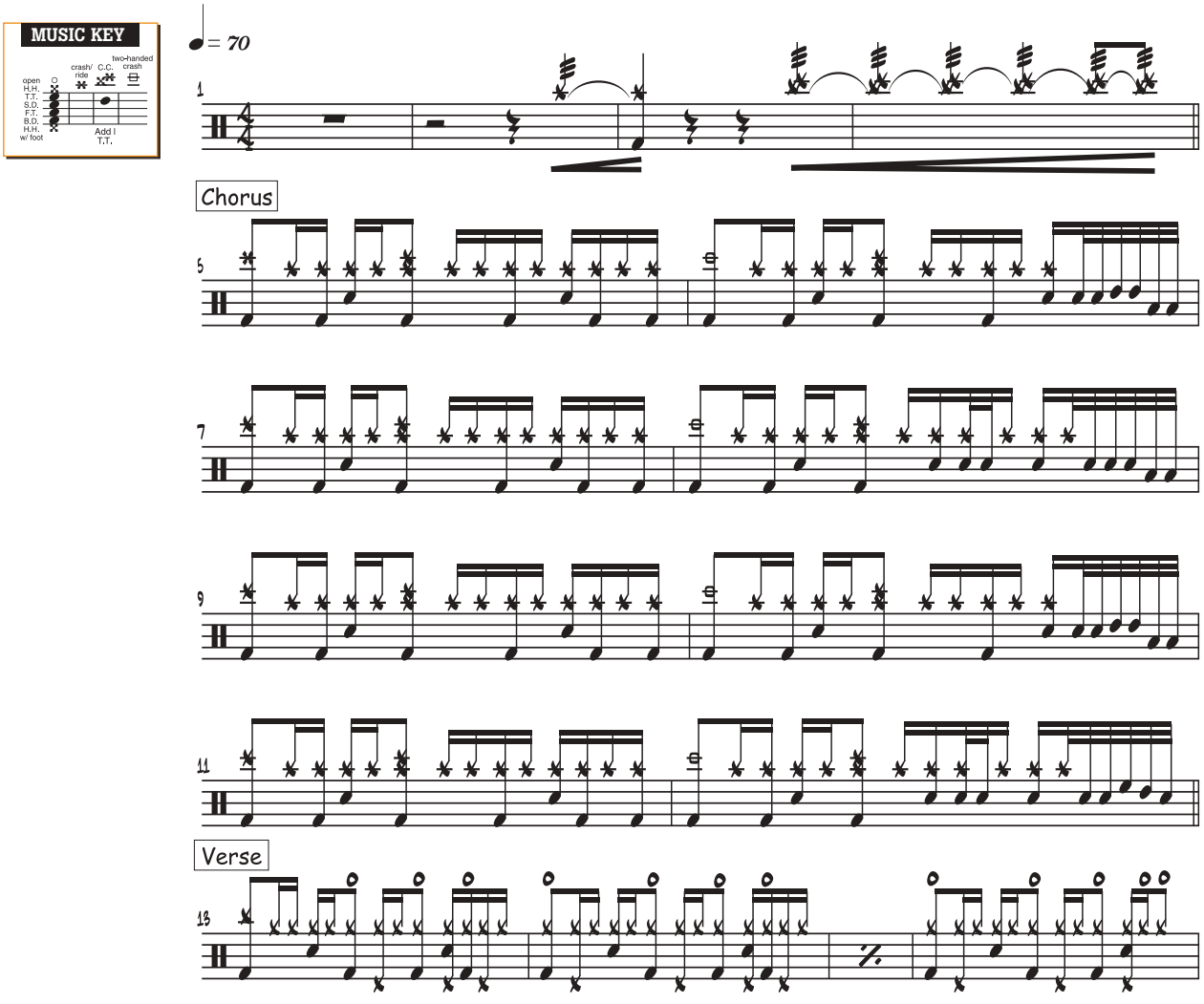
Power Flams. Many times, Travis lifts his sticks to the same height (at, above, or beyond his head). But when he strikes the drums, the right stick hits before the left. Travis plays power flams on the snare and between the middle and floor toms in the tribal part of the verses.

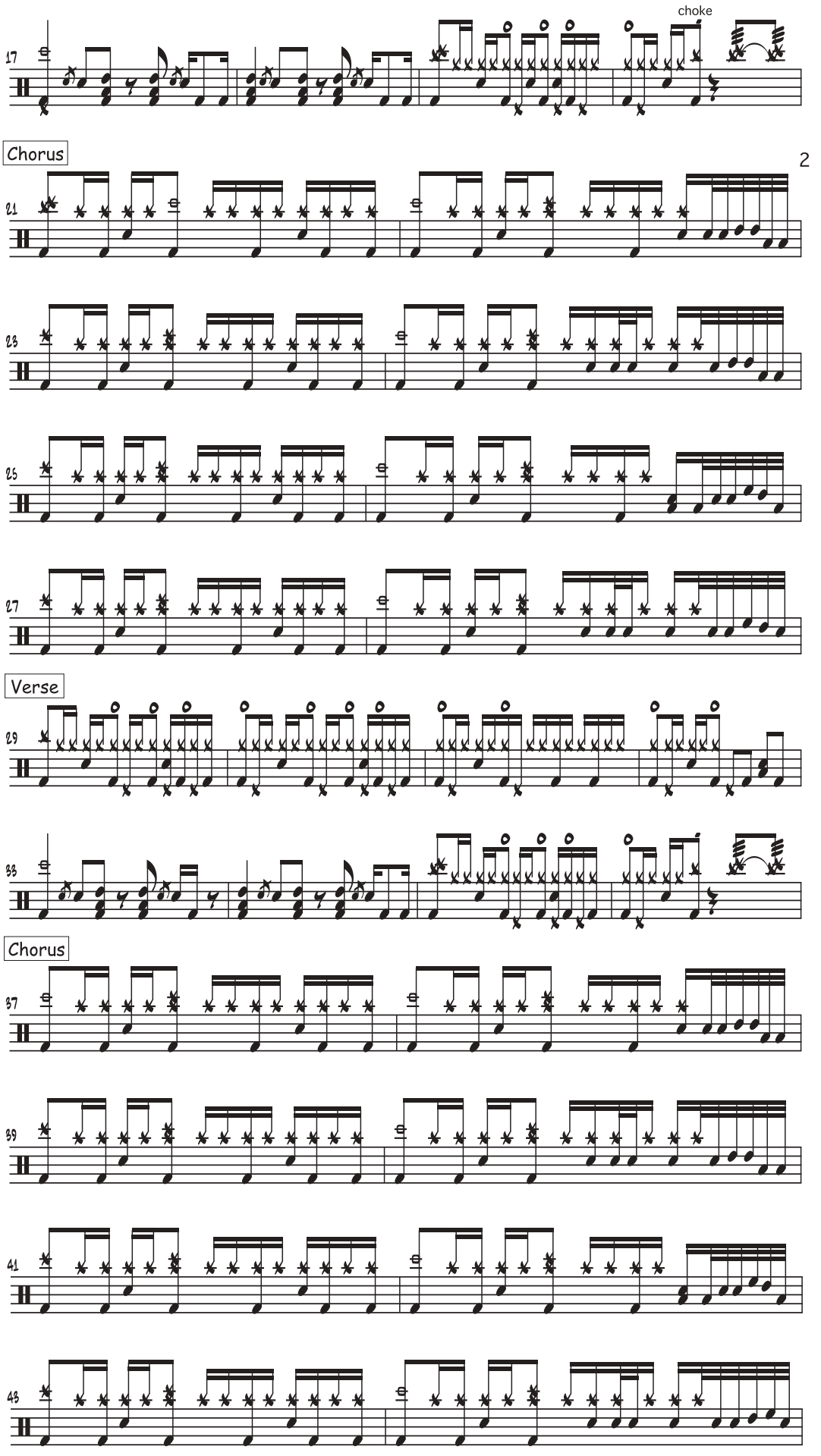
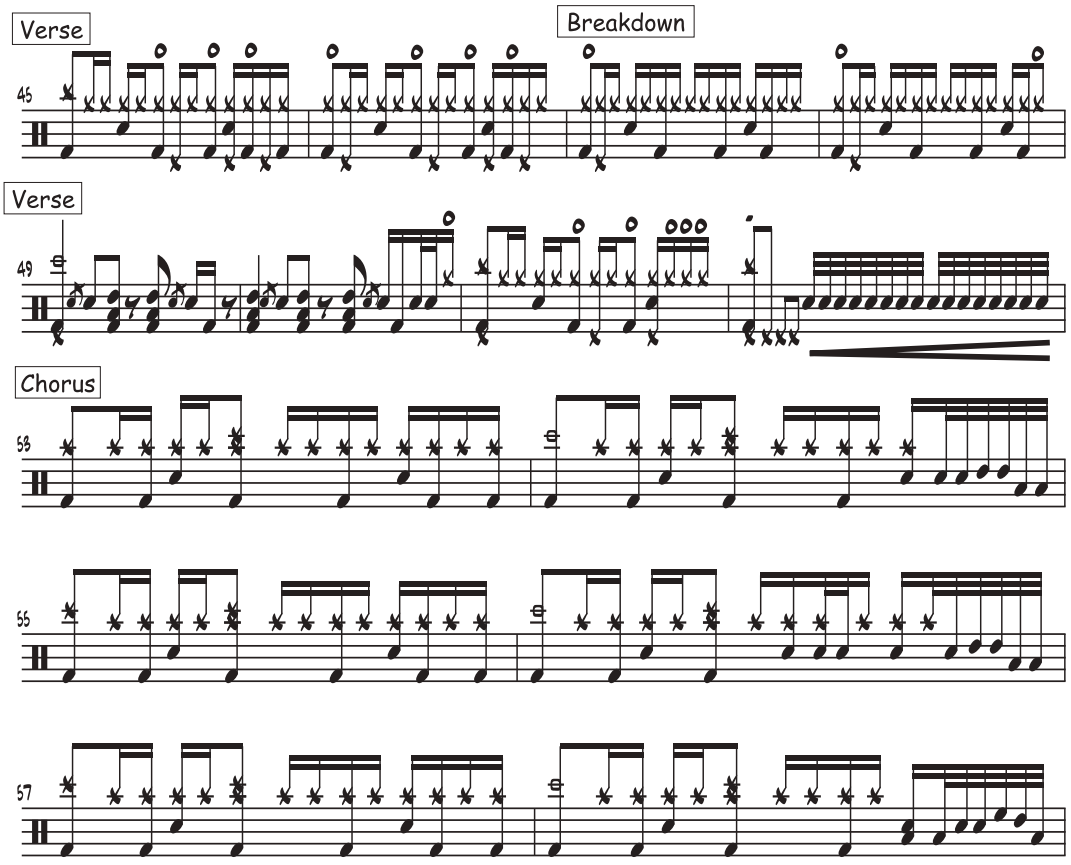
Cymbal Chokes. Travis chokes his cymbals at the end of the first two verses. He hits the cymbal with his right stick and chokes it with the left.

Big Breakdown. Travis creates a breakdown in measures 47 and 48. He changes the tone of this section by playing less open hi-hat notes.

Snare Drum Crescendos. In measure 52 and 68, Travis plays snare drum crescendos to add momentum and build intensity in the song.

Body Language. Travis uses his body to keep time and to help create the right funk feel. Watch how his left foot bounces during the choruses. He also bobs his head along with the accent pattern in his right hand, and his back sometimes bends to the pulse of the quarter note.



TRAVIS BARKER

Verse
Breakdown
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Verse
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Chorus
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55
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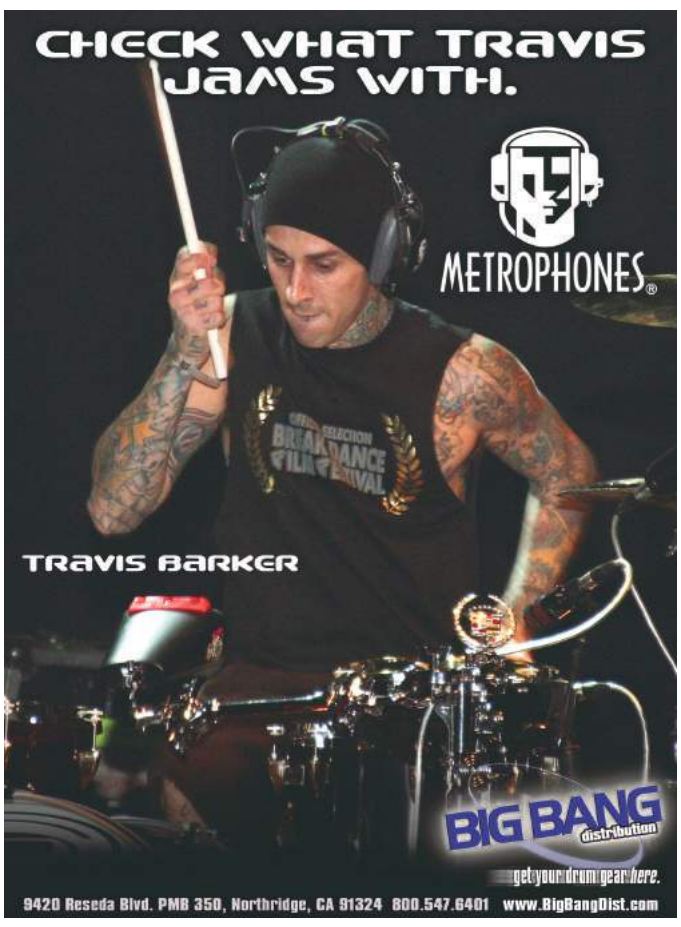
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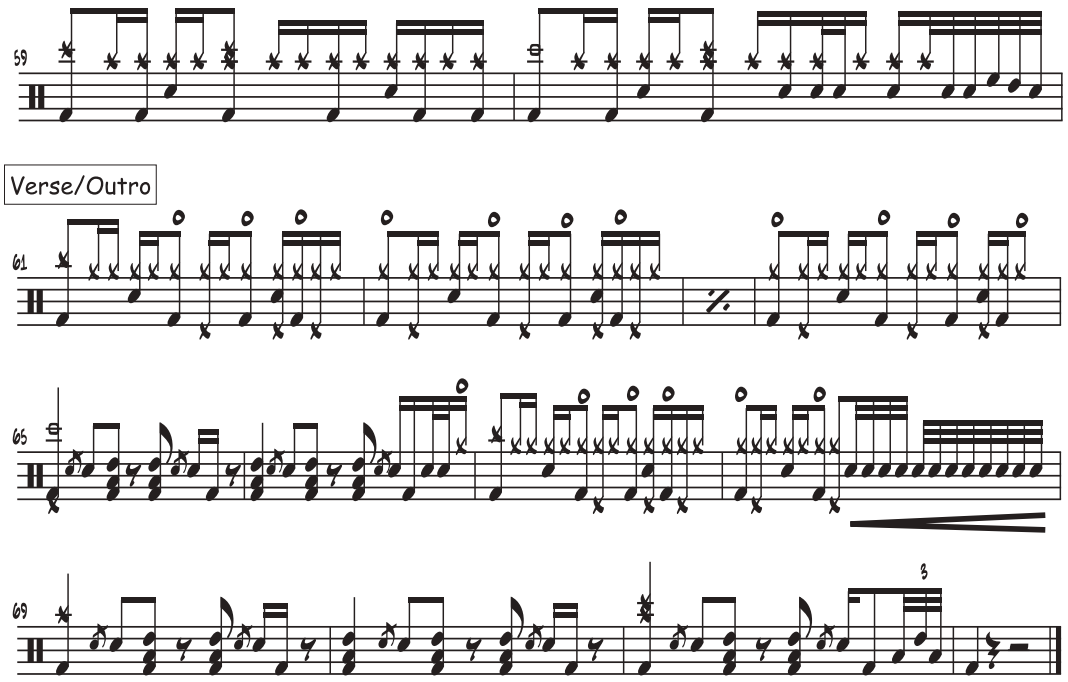
Andy Ziker performs and teaches in and around Phoenix, Arizona. His book, *Drumscapes,* is available at www.andyziker.com.

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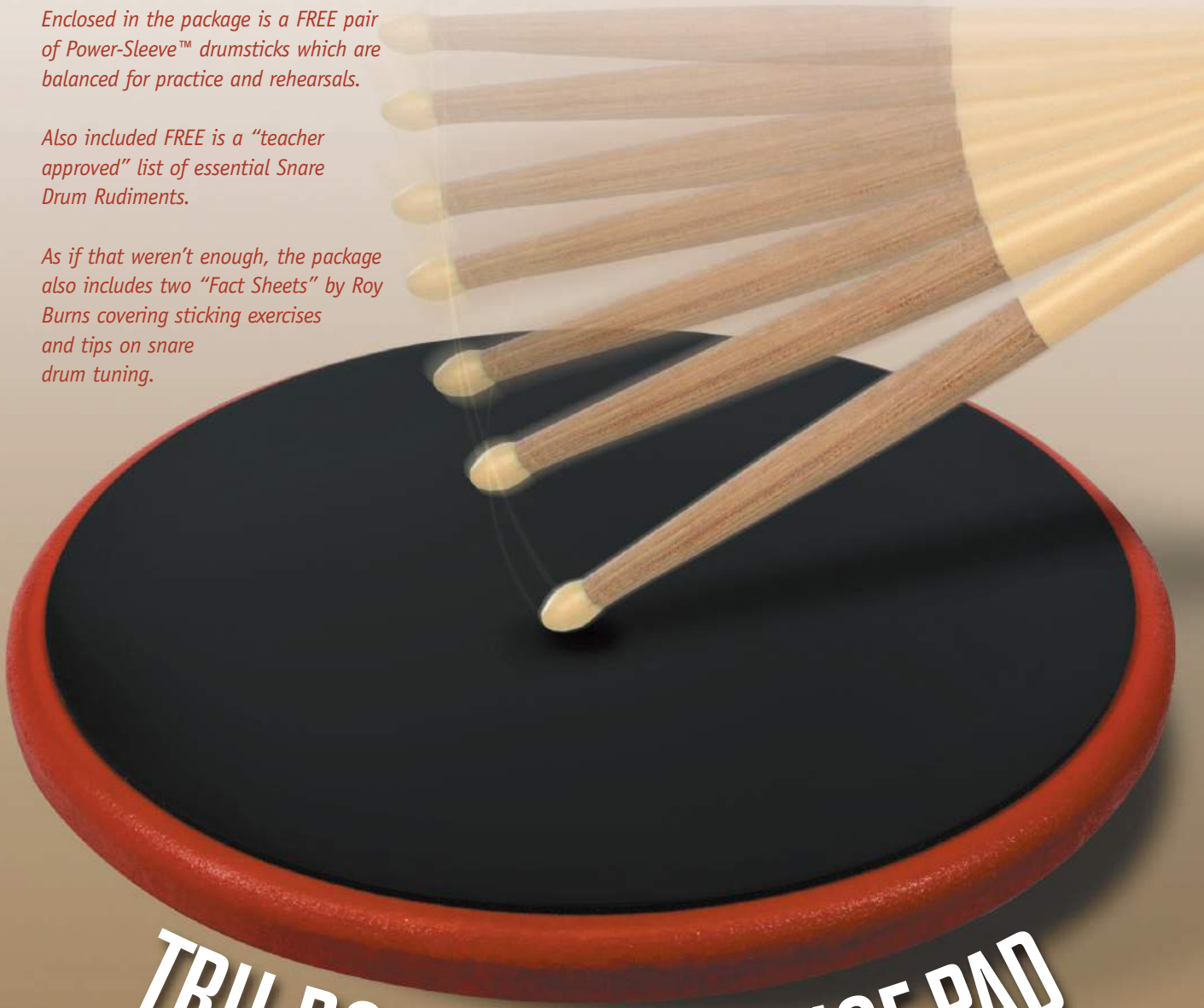

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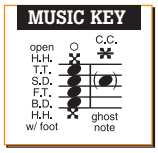
Angels & Airwaves' Atom Willard

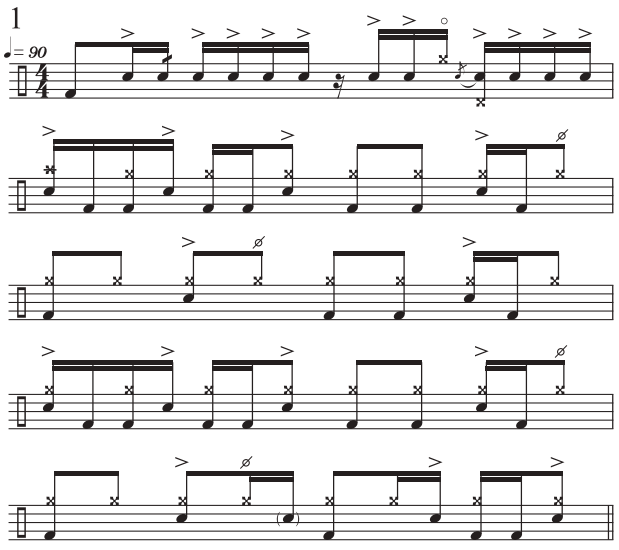
I Empire

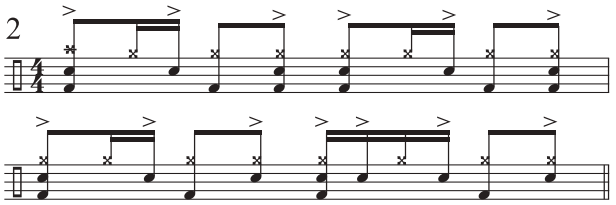
by Ed Breckenfeld



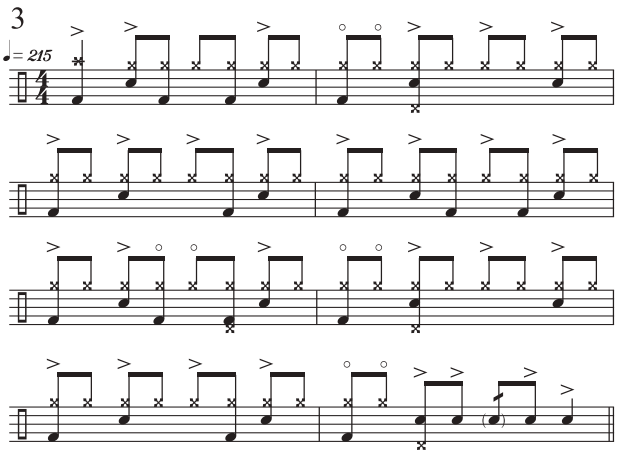
The second album from Tom DeLonge' s post Blink-182 project features a great performance from Atom Willard. The ex-Rocket From The Crypt drummer shows off his versatility, creating cool original beats one moment, then locking into straightforward dance grooves the next. Willard' s playing is a true asset for Angels & Airwaves, enhancing DeLonge' s lush soundscapes with earthy rhythms and the occasional explosive fill. Below are some stand-out examples from I Empire.

"Call To Arms"

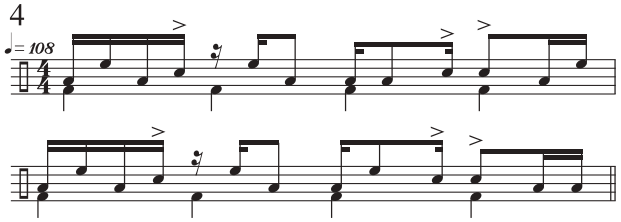
Here are Atom' s re-entry fill and second verse beat from the album' s opening track. The first two beats of the second and fourth measures give his two-measure pattern an exciting and unusual kickoff. (2:21)

Later in the song, Willard breaks down to a quarter-note kick drum and marching-style rolls. When the full groove returns, Atom' s driving bass drum and multiple snare accents bring the song to a high-energy climax. (4:00)



"Everything' s Magic"

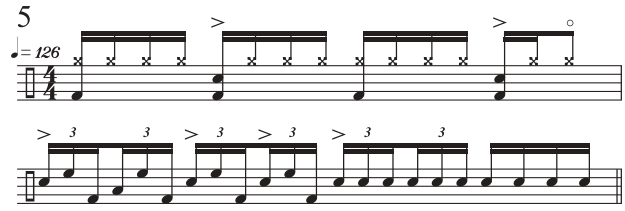
Atom' s drum-only intro for this speedy tune contains some interesting open hi-hat work. (0:00)

"Breathe"

Willard' s syncopated tom groove (Example 4) propels the choruses of this track. Atom adds melodic interest to his pattern by slightly altering the sequence of tom notes in the last two beats of each measure. (4:17)

4

"Love Like Rockets"

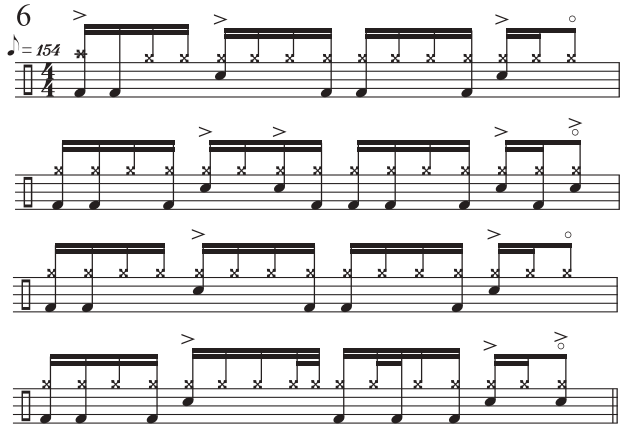
Here's a monster drum fill that jumps out of a straight dance groove. Atom's progression from triplets to 16th notes is executed flawlessly. (3:59)

5

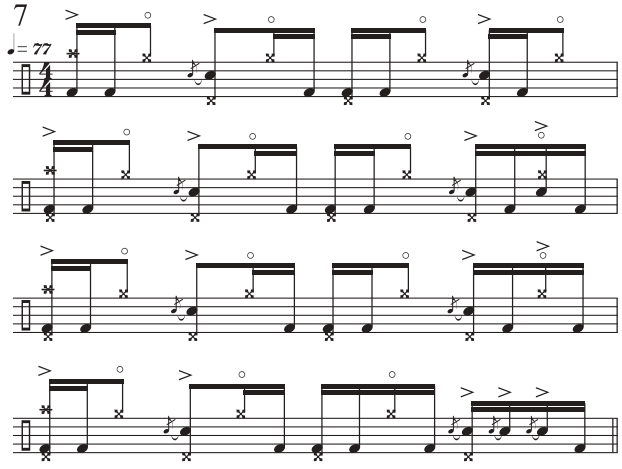


"Sirens"

This song breaks down to the following halftime groove after the first chorus. Check out Willard's bass drum work, double snare hits, open hi-hats, and creative use of 32nd notes in the fourth measure. (1:27)

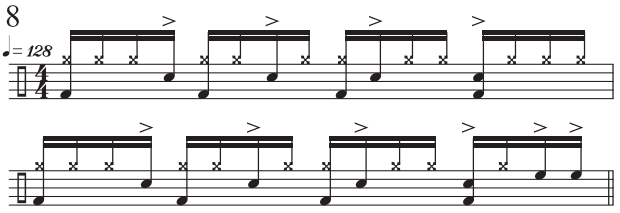
6

"Secret Crowds"

This beat is from one of the heavier sequences on the album. Atom's use of repeating flams and open hi-hats is dramatic. (0:31)

7

"True Love"

On this track, Willard alternates between his snare and hi-hat to mimic the accents in Tom DeLonge's 16th-note guitar hook. This creates an interesting polyrhythm between the snare accents and the quarter-note kick pattern. (4:25)

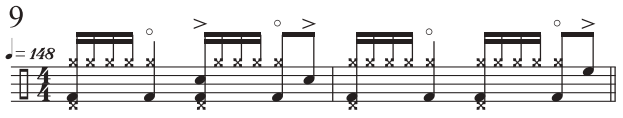
8



"Rite Of Spring"

Here's a beat that works on two levels. The off-beat open hi-hat pattern and heavy snare accent on the third beat of the first measure gives the groove a half-time effect, while the quarter-note bass drum part maintains the song's uptempo energy. (0:29)

9



"Heaven"

This great verse groove is designed to fit closely to DeLonge's vocal. Atom's flams and unexpected snare placement make this an unusual but very effective beat. (1:52)

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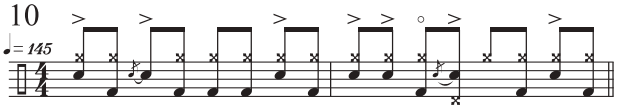
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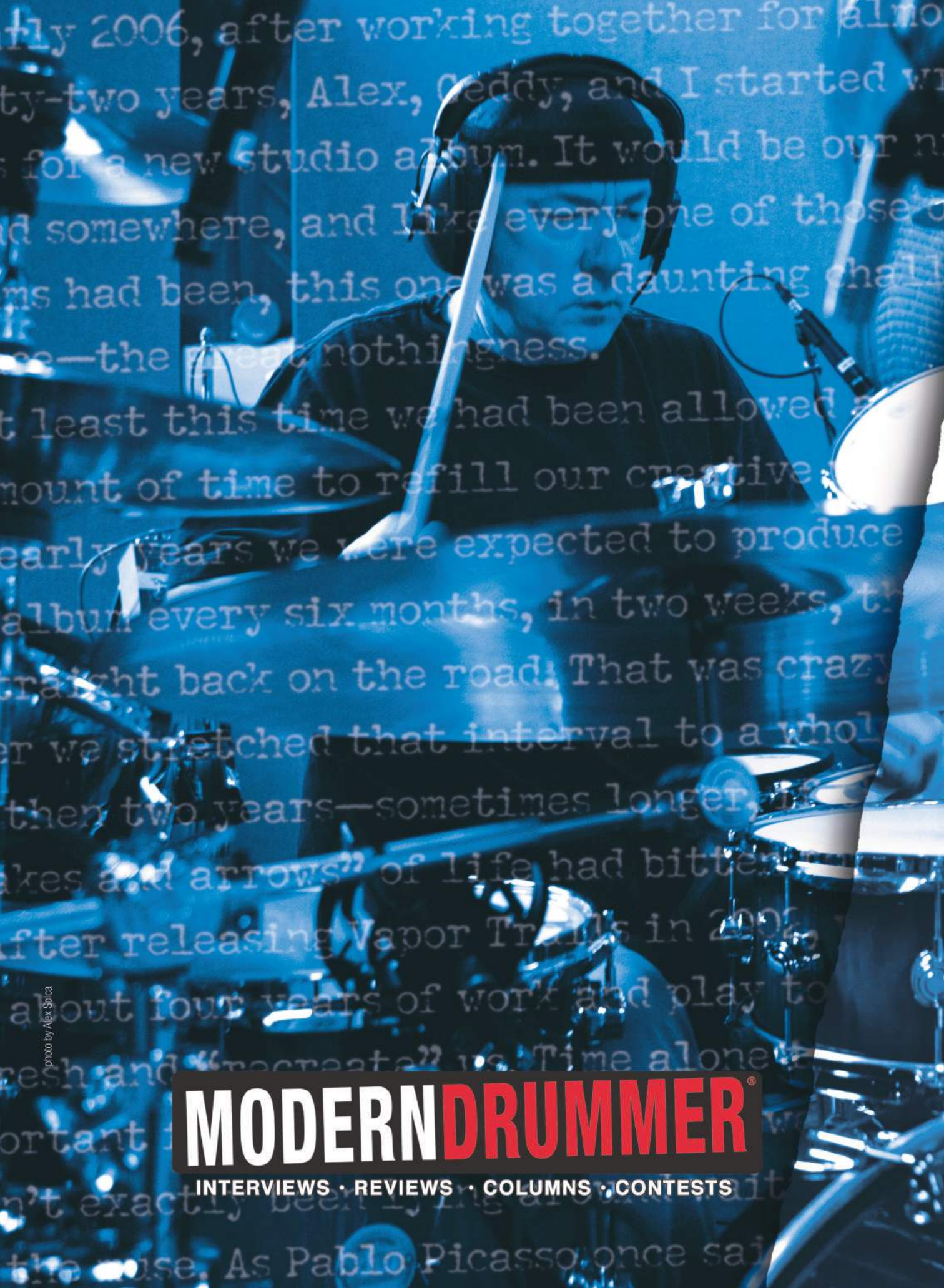
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photo by Alex Solca

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— Neil Peart
(August 2007)

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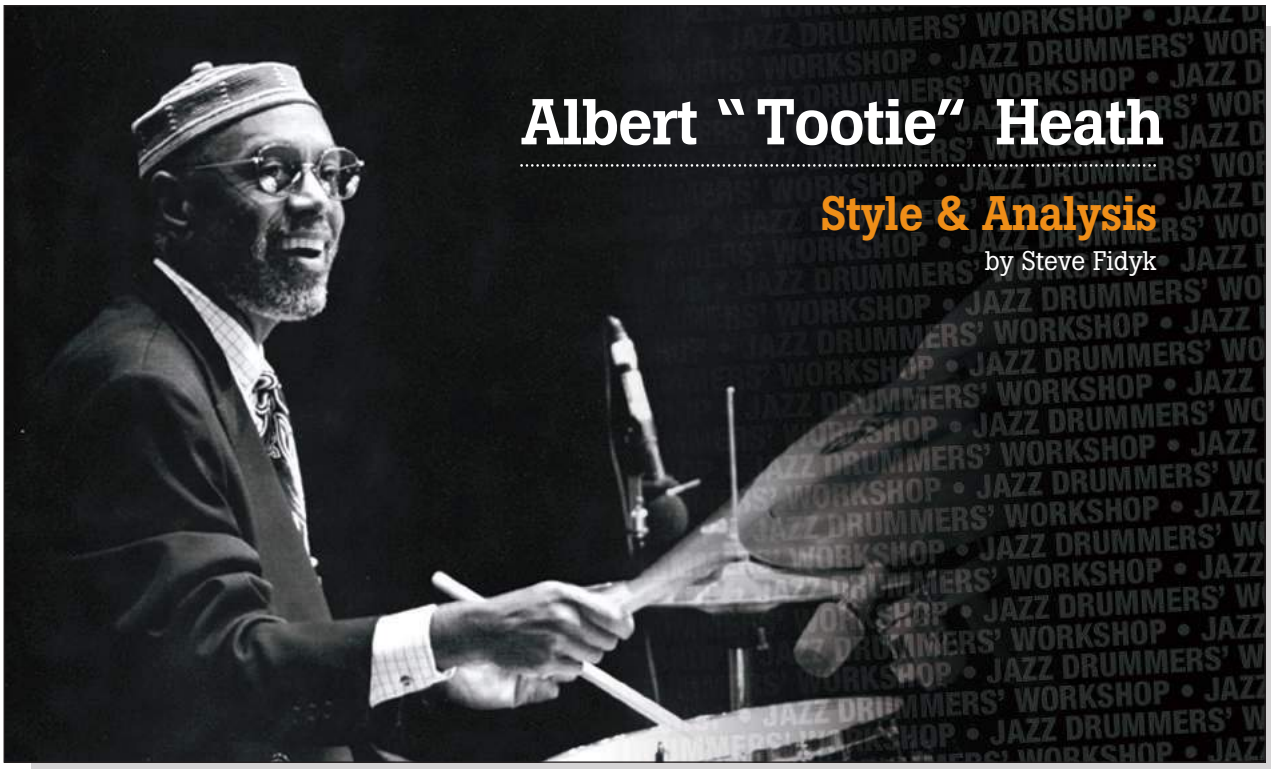
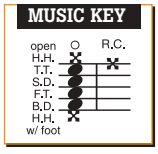


Albert "Tootie" Heath

Style & Analysis

by Steve Fidyk



Philadelphia was a very important center for jazz in the 1950s and '60s. During those years, east coast musicians like Horace Silver, Art Blakey, and Miles Davis were creating a new type of jazz, called hard bop, which incorporated elements of blues and Gospel music. Philadelphia was home to many important performers of this new music, including trumpeter Clifford Brown, saxophonists John Coltrane and Hank Mobley, drummer Philly Joe Jones, and three brothers—saxophonist Jimmy, bassist Percy, and drummer Albert "Tootie" Heath.

Tootie, who was born May 31, 1935, is the youngest of the Heath crew. His first of more than six hundred recordings was with John Coltrane in 1957 (Coltrane on Prestige). Tootie was also the last drummer to perform with the famed Modern Jazz Quartet.

While growing up in South Philly, Tootie had the opportunity to study with legendary drummer Specs Wright. Specs helped the young drummer develop his touch and coordination. Heath also cites Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Billy Higgins, and Philly Joe Jones as major influences.

The Source Of Swing

Known for his light touch and sensitivity, Tootie is one of the most swinging drummers to grace the instrument. His main source of swing is his ride beat, while his snare, bass drum, and hi-hat are primarily used for accompaniment.

With the exception of up tempos and implied double-time grooves, Tootie's ride beat has a loose triplet feel with emphasis on the quarter note.

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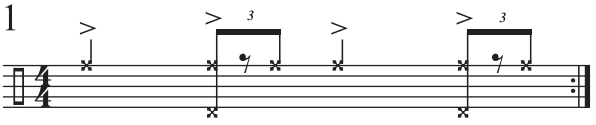

Tootie's up-tempo ride beat tends to straighten out, with an accent on 2 and 4.

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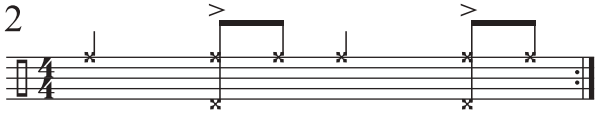
Tootie's implied double-time beat is reminiscent of Philly Joe Jones' groove on the classic John Coltrane recording Blue Trane.

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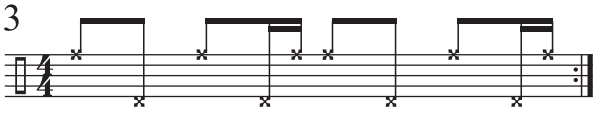
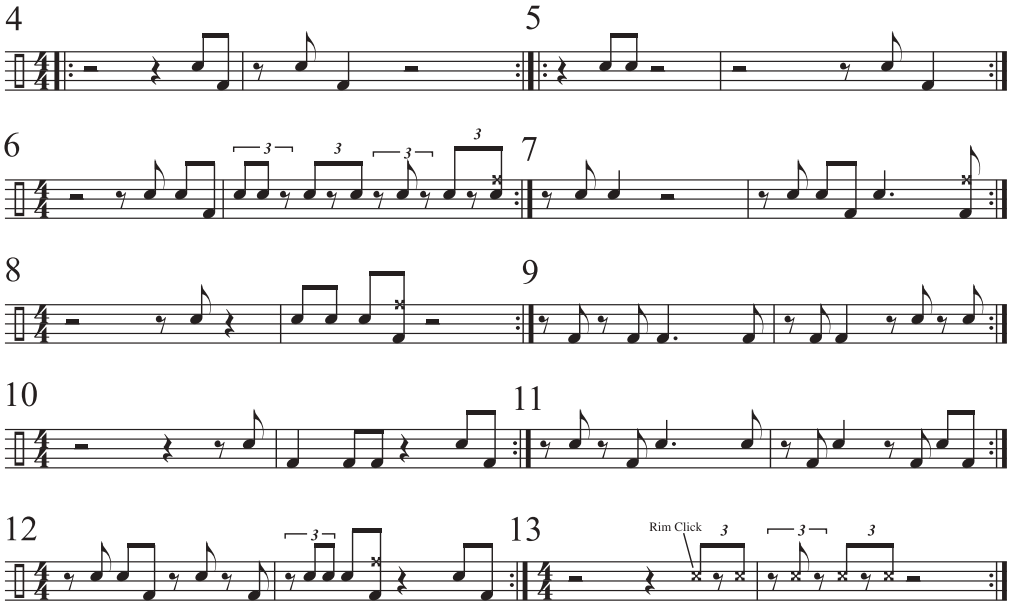
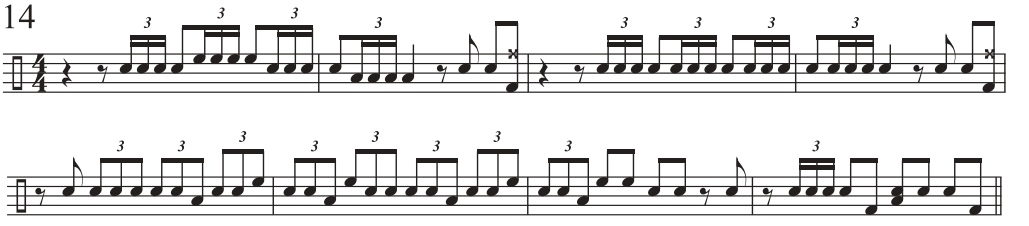
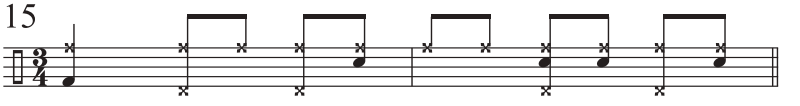
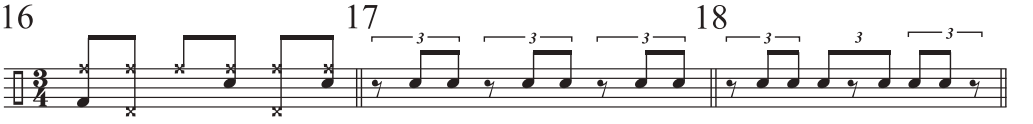
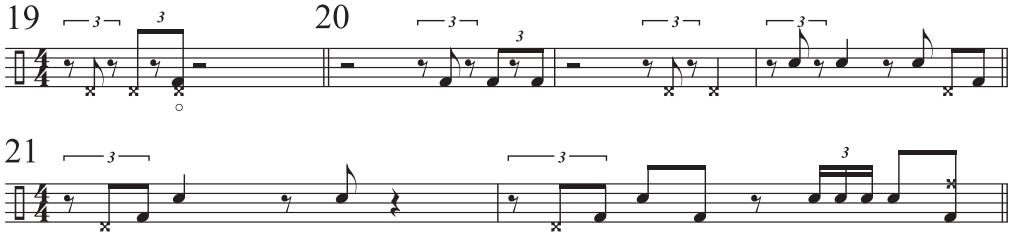
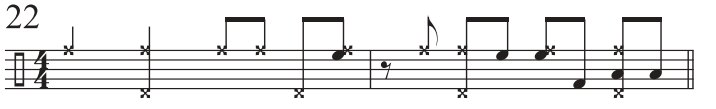

Musical Excerpts From A Master

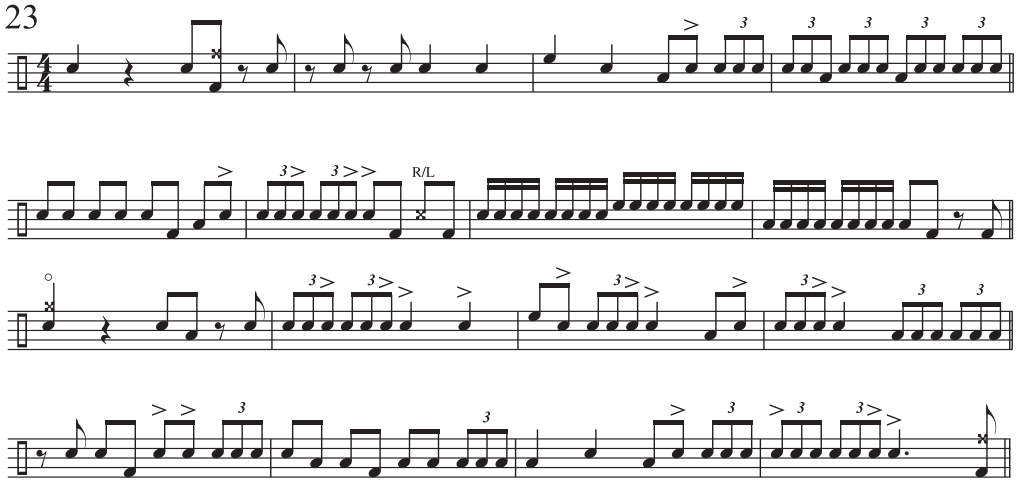
Two of my favorite recordings that feature Tootie are The Incredible Guitar Of Wes Montgomery and Jimmy Heath's The Thumper.

Examples 4–13 are riff-based comping ideas that Tootie plays in the track "Four On Six," from the Wes Montgomery recording. These figures are similar to what you'd hear from hard bop masters Art Blakey and Philly Joe Jones. As you practice the riffs, be sure to keep a consistent and flowing ride cymbal beat while playing 2 and 4 on the hi-hat.

" Four On Six" also illustrates Tootie' s soloing abilities with brushes. Here' s his eight-bar solo break.



Here' s an example of Tootie' s 3/4 playing on " West Coast Blues" from the same Wes Montgomery recording. Example 15 is his basic two-measure beat.

Examples 16–18 are some variations that Heath plays during the instrumental solos.

On the track " Gone With The Wind," Tootie plays a beautiful legato brush beat while adding comping patterns with his feet. Here are some examples.

On the track " For Minors Only," from the Jimmy Heath recording The Thumper, Tootie plays a bell pattern that' s reminiscent of Art Blakey' s famous mambo beat.

ALBERT "TOOTIE" HEATH

Later in the track, Tootie trades fours with the band. In each of these four-measure solos, the drummer creates phrases out of the rhythmic language that he learned from Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, and Art Blakey.

23

Steve Fidyk is the drummer and featured soloist with The Army Blues Jazz Ensemble from Washington, D.C. His two instructional method book/DVDs, *The Drum Set SMART Book* and *Set Up And Play!,* are available through Mel Bay. Steve is also a member of the jazz faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more information, visit www.stevefidyk.com.

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Welcome To Storyville

Telling Tales With Accents

by Chet Doboe

This article focuses on the ever-potent accent. As one way to take a listener on an exciting musical journey, accent patterns allow us to tell thrilling rhythmic stories in a variety of ways.

Before we dive into the accent study, here are some general musical storytelling techniques to consider that' ll help make your playing more effective:

1. Combine various rhythmic figures. These can include different subdivisions, sticking patterns, syncopation, polyrhythms, etc.

2. Use dynamics. This includes accents, volume contrasts from whisper-soft to thunderous, and gradual changes in volume (soft to loud, loud to soft).

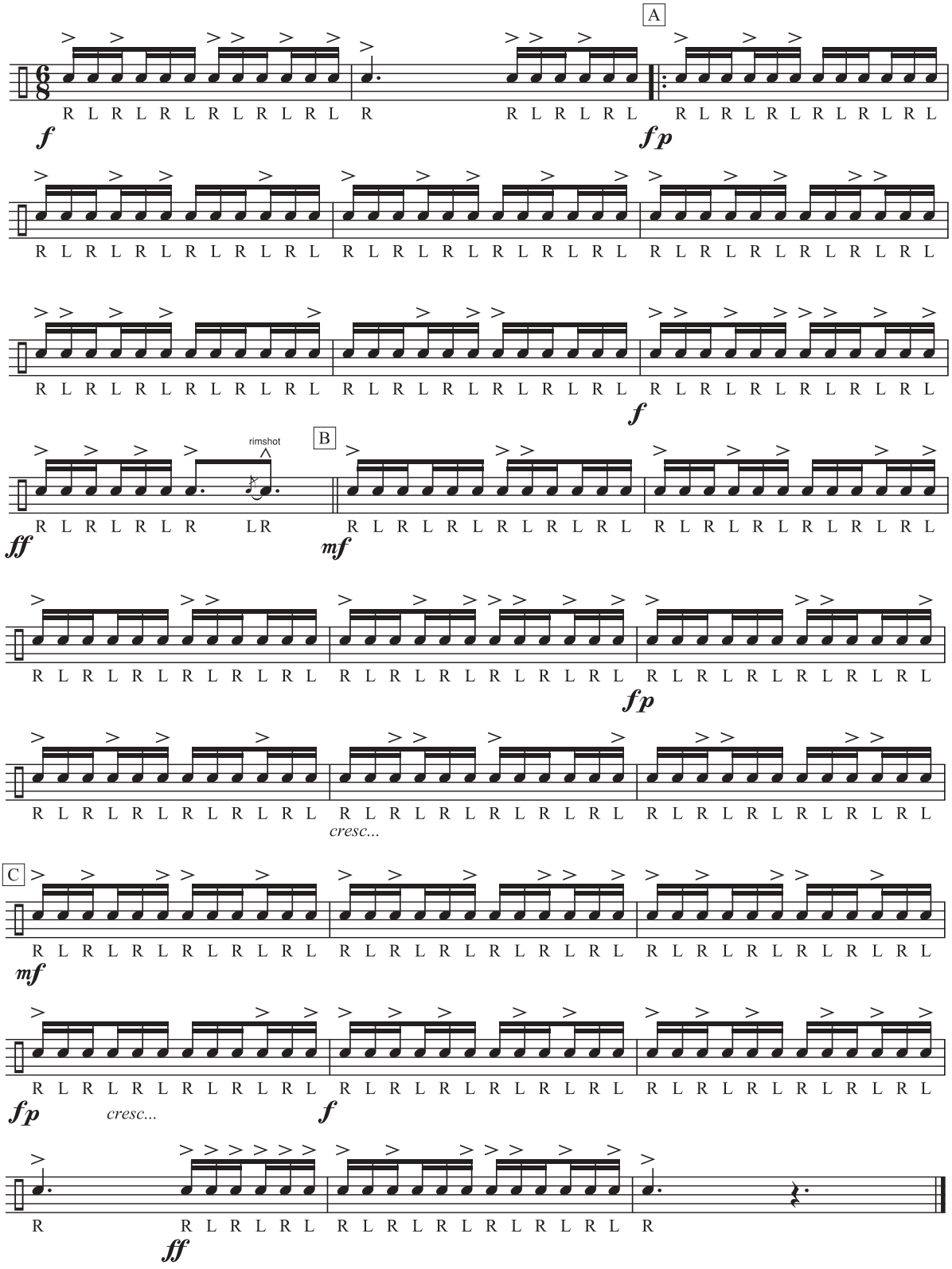
3. Voicings. There are many different colors on the drumset—cymbals, drums, cowbells….

4. Timbre. You can pull out a variety of sounds from each instrument in your setup depending on how you strike it, what type of stick/mallet you use, and so on.

5. The use of silence. Rests can be just as effective as complex figures.

6. Feel. Our ability to project emotion when we play is as important as anything else.

Now let' s play some music. The goal of any accent workout is to build a vocabulary of patterns that can then be employed in musical situations. What follows is a short solo called " Storyville." This piece applies accents in the context of sextuplets, using single-stroke stickings. One way to develop your storytelling abilities is to learn pieces like this. Mastering this and other solos will help develop your compositional sense so that you can begin to tell tales of your own. Enjoy!



Chet Doboe is the leader of the award-winning Hip Pickles drum group, and he's music director of the Zap Boom Bam percussion ensemble. Chet is the author of twenty drum books, including his latest, *Funky Chunk*. Chet is also a drum facilitator for corporate events, and he's active as a clinician for Pearl, Sabian, Remo, Pro-Mark, and Gibraltar. For more info, log onto www.hippickles.com.

My Two Cents

Opening A Drummers' Dialog

by Chris Adler

Let me start by saying how honored, yet awkward, I feel about writing a column for Modern Drummer. This might make more sense if I try to explain my position.

A Bit Of Backstory

I grew up a normal suburban kid—a bit rebellious, but no more than the other troublemakers. I was into skating and Mötley Crüe, I sat in the back of the school bus, I didn't have a ton of friends, and I generally kept to myself. Not in a "woe is me," Marilyn Manson kind of way, but more of a "screw-you kid with a jeans jacket hiding in the woods during first period with a cig" kind of way.

Through middle and high school I got into all kinds of rock music, from Aerosmith to Megadeth, and I was enamored with the lifestyle that the rock magazines portrayed. Music was going to be my ticket to chicks, money, and fame—and the sky was the limit. All I needed to do was figure out how to play something and grow my hair.

By high school I was playing bass guitar. I learned by ear, practicing my butt off. I got into several bands, but nothing of note. By senior year, I was deep into heavy metal. Zeppelin was cool, but Slayer was deadly. I quit my cover bands and joined a metal act near my home. We practiced in my folks' garage, where the drummer would leave his double bass kit set up. He told me not to play it. Yeah, right. I was on it the moment he left. Before I knew it, though, it was time to head to college.

The MD Connection

By now I was well familiar with Modern Drummer magazine and the MD Festival DVDs, because kids who were drummers would always be talking about them. "You gotta see this guy!" and "Check out this pic of Neil's sweet RotoToms," they'd say. I always thought drums were cool, so I checked out a few of the Festival DVDs at friends' houses. All of those drummers seemed inhuman. In addition, MD would have experts talking in crazy drum code that I could never seem to translate or understand. It was intimidating to me—and I didn't even play drums!

Gettin' To The Drums

Fast-forward a few years. I'm now out of the dorms, still a dyed-in-the-wool-metalhead looking for a metal band in which to play bass. I'd been playing with an alt/punk band and doing some touring for the first time. I loved it; I just wished it were more metal.

Quite by chance I bumped into a fellow bass player from my first year in the dorms. He asked if I wanted to start a project with him. I was confused, since we both played bass. But he and I both knew that I'd always wanted to take a crack at drums, and the project he had in mind wasn't going to be serious anyway. Good enough for me.

I opened the local trading-post magazine and found a no-name kit. The legs on the kick drum didn't both touch the ground at the same time, so the drum would wobble back and forth when I kicked it. That didn't matter. At twenty years old I fell in love with playing drums.

Getting Started

Practice, practice, practice. No intimidating lessons or books, just jam. Hear it in your head? Figure out how to make your body do it. Can't figure it out? Drink a beer and try again. I was hooked. John, the bass player, would come over and jam. He

I always thought drums were cool, so I checked out a few of the Festival DVDs at friends' houses. All of those drummers seemed inhuman.

was soon followed by Mark, a guitar player, and—presto!—I was in a metal band, just what I always wanted.

It sure didn't seem like any of the rock magazines, though. I was struggling to keep up. I vividly remember that my girlfriend and I couldn't afford to heat the place, so we could see each other breathing as we practiced in the winter of 1994. These were the trenches.

But I Got Out

That seems like a hundred years ago, and since then I've been fortunate to travel the world many times over, tour with almost every one of my childhood heroes, receive a Grammy nomination, work with some of the greatest gear manufacturers on the planet, have a record hit the Top 10, place a platinum DVD on my wall, and perform at the 2005 Modern Drummer Festival. That's right: The same MD Festival DVDs that scared me as a kid, I was now privileged (and still scared to death) to be a part of.

On From Here

As this column continues in the coming months, I'll be able to tell you how things developed since the early days. But for the purpose of explaining why this is both amazing and awkward for me, I believe I've made my case. I'm not the MD model. I'm not the Berklee kid. I'm the kid with the jeans jacket and the "don't tell me I can't do it" attitude.

I want this column to serve as a beacon for those of you who might normally find this magazine intimidating. I want to bring my point of view to your questions, thoughts, and concerns relating to anything at all. I might have been there. I might have broken that hurdle—before burning it in my dust. Just ask. I don't claim to be an expert, but I've been around the block a few times, and from love advice to pedal-spring tension, I might know a thing or two.

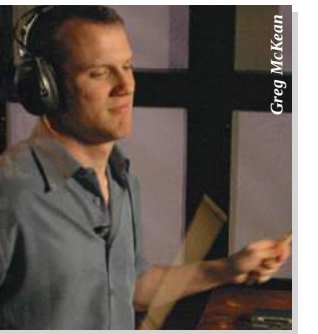
I'm looking forward to hearing from you and giving you my two cents. Till then, stay metal.

Chris Adler is the drummer for the platinum-selling metal band Lamb Of God. His impact on the drum community is marked by his win in the Up & Coming Drummer category in *MD*'s 2005 Readers Poll, and in the Best Metal Drummer category only two years later. His performance at the 2005 MD Festival Weekend is highlighted on that year's Festival DVD, as well as on an expanded special-edition DVD with Jason Bittner. Questions for Chris may be sent to miked@moderndrummer.com. Indicate "For Chris Adler" in the subject line.

Accentuate The Positive

Tips For Building Confidence On The Drums

by Matt Ritter


Greg McKean

Every now and then, someone will email me with a question about drumming. These questions generally pertain to issues like pedal technique or drum setups. Recently, though, I received a question I found to be unusual, yet extremely relevant. The question was, "How does one go about developing self-confidence on the drums?" What a great question.

It occurs to me that all other questions become irrelevant if a drummer is unable to simply feel good about him or herself when approaching the instrument. With this in mind, let's look at some important ways that we can strengthen and maintain our self-confidence as drummers.

The Power Of Words

To begin with, we must pay close attention to what we say to and about ourselves. Confidence is a state of mind. If you're walking around thinking, "I'm a horrible drummer—my time is weak, I'm uncoordinated…" how could you possibly feel confident when you sit down to play? It doesn't matter if these negative messages are true or not; they'll affect you nonetheless.

Think of the experience of watching a movie. Rationally, you know that what you're watching isn't really happening. Yet you can go through a whole array of emotional responses during the course of the film. Our mind responds to the messages we send it—even messages that are clearly irrational. So make those messages positive. If you're going to say something to yourself, say, "I'm a great drummer. I enjoy playing the drums. I'm confident." This isn't about having an inflated ego; it's about consciously choosing to send positive messages to yourself so that you can feel good about playing music.

Consider, too, the way you speak about yourself to others. Sometimes, people will speak poorly about themselves to others because they think that this is being modest. In truth, this is just another way of sabotaging our own self-confidence by emphasizing the negative. When you say something to someone, your own mind hears it and responds to it. Therefore, when speaking to others, as when speaking to yourself, choose to send empowering messages. This doesn't mean that you should be dishonest. Simply choose to emphasize the positive. By doing that, you ensure that your mind is receiving healthy messages, and you create an uplifting environment with the people in your life. All of this will contribute to your sense of confidence and well-being when you sit down at the drums.

The Skills For The Job

There are some times when we have a good reason not to feel confident—like when we genuinely don't possess the skills required to accomplish the task at hand. If you were told that you needed to build a jet airplane tomorrow—and then fly it—you'd obviously feel a great sense of anxiety and lack of confidence about this. That would be completely normal.

Likewise, if you feel a lack of confidence in a certain area of your drumming, maybe it's for good reason. Maybe you realize that you haven't yet developed the skills necessary to play effectively in that area. This isn't a character flaw. It's simply a reflection of the fact that there is always more to learn. A perfect example is a wonderful jazz-trio drummer who feels unconfident playing in a big band because he doesn't know how to read a drum chart. Developing self-confidence in a certain area of drumming involves thoroughly studying and practicing the skills involved in that area.

If you're walking around thinking, "I'm a horrible drummer—my time is weak, I'm uncoordinated…" how could you possibly feel confident when you sit down to play?

If you're still a beginner on the drums, you may well feel a lack of confidence in all areas of drumming. Again, this is completely normal. Let's face it: There's a lot involved in drumming. There are beats, fills, rudiments, reading, soloing, and countless other things to be learned. For a beginner, every one of these issues is new, and perhaps intimidating. Again, an important step here is to proactively increase and improve the skills that you possess. There are many ways to do this. In addition to

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taking lessons, you can read drumming magazines and books, watch DVDs, and even check out drumming tips and exercises online. Take advantage of all of these methods to boost your skills, and, in turn, your confidence.

Getting Experience

It's completely natural to feel a lack of confidence when you find yourself in an unfamiliar situation. Obviously, the solution to this is to increase the number of situations that are familiar to you. In other words, get as much actual drumming experience as possible. Join a band, sign up for an ensemble class, and sit in at jam sessions. The more you play with others, the less foreign it will seem, and the more confident you'll feel about making music.

When doing this, it's a good idea to play with people at the same level as you. Otherwise, the results can be disastrous. Many years ago, when I was a beginner drummer, I placed myself in a situation where I had to play jazz with musicians who were much more experienced than I was. These musicians not only had extensive musical training, but they were actually jazz specialists. I, on the other hand, was still learning the fundamentals of drumming, and I knew nothing yet about jazz. Of course, it went horribly. As a result, my confidence as a drummer flew out the window.

Looking back, it's clear that I was in a completely inappropriate situation for me at that stage of my development. This isn't to say that we should avoid challenges. Challenges make us grow, and we can certainly learn from more experienced musicians. The trick is to discern which situations present a healthy challenge and learning opportunity, and which simply aren't right for us at that time. Confidence comes from accumulating positive experiences, not negative ones.

The Company You Keep

Just as you need to watch what you say to others, you also need to watch what others say to you. Surrounding yourself with people who discourage you can erode your self-confidence. Remember, we respond to the messages we receive, even if those messages aren't true. Actively choose to associate with people who share your vision and positively support what you're trying to accomplish.

Sometimes it can be difficult to find people who are positive and supportive. People can be discouraging, even if they have good intentions. When I was first embarking on my music career, I encountered a lot of resistance and discouragement...especially from my own friends and family. Despite their lack of knowledge about the music industry, they tried to convince me that there was no way to make a living in music. They had bought into the "starving artist" concept, even though none of them actually knew any artists who were starving.

Obviously, I couldn't disassociate myself from every person in my life. The solution was to take their predictions of gloom and doom with a grain of salt. I reminded myself that my discouragers were completely uninformed about the topic at hand, and I balanced their influence by seeking out the guidance of people who were informed. At every opportunity, I spoke to professional drummers about their experiences in the music business. I went to clinics, took lessons, and wrote letters to famous drummers. By doing all of this, I generated an influx of positive, knowledgeable reinforcement for myself. So my confidence remained intact.

Failure On The Road To Success

Finally, keep in mind that no one is perfect. If you read the interviews in Modern Drummer, you'll see that even the greatest of the great have weaknesses, flaws, off days, and occasional bad luck. Master drummers sometimes get fired. Musical giants sometimes realize that they need to revamp their entire approach. All of this is part of the learning process and the journey toward reaching one's musical potential.

When you're the one having an off day or facing a personal weakness, keep it in perspective. It happens to everyone. Stay enthusiastic, learn from it, and recommit to the following self-confidence builders: Speak positively to and about yourself, work on your skills, accumulate experience, and surround yourself with supportive people. If you do that, you can't miss. Best of luck to you.

Matt Ritter is one of New York City's most in-demand drumset teachers. His students have included eager children, adult hobbyists, working pros, and an international drumming superstar. His DVD, *Bass Drum Techniques For Today's Drummer: Unburying The Beater,* is distributed by Hal Leonard. For more information, visit www.MattRitterMusic.com.

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It's Not Easy Being Gray

Tips For The Over-Fifty-Five Drummer

by Bernie Schallehn

My first drum was a red 3x10 snare that came with mismatched sticks and no stand. I set the little drum on my desk, hung a pot lid from a doorknob, and until I went through the paper head two days later, I was Ringo Starr!

Today I have a dedicated drum room that houses the sizeable collection of drums I've amassed since I first bought that little red snare. Along with the drums, I've also amassed a number of birthdays. I'm now fifty-six. I may have grown older, but my love of drums and drumming has stayed young.

However, around the time I turned fifty, I noticed that many of my drumming contemporaries were beginning to quit. As I listened to their reasons, I heard the same themes: tired of carrying equipment...tired of the late hours...feeling stale...out of shape physically...and often a sense of being "an old guy playing a young man's game." I found this disconcerting, because these guys still lit up like a Christmas tree when we talked shop.

When I attend drum expos and clinics I usually see a healthy number of the over-fifty-five crowd. After talking with many of these attendees, however, I find that they describe themselves as an "enthusiast"—someone who is no longer performing, but is instead merely a spectator. They've long since sold their kit or given it away to a grandchild.

It's the aim of this article to help those who are fifty-five and older to remain active players in the game, to keep performing for as long as it provides joy and satisfaction. For those of you who are simply watching, wishing it was you again up there on stage, I hope my words will inspire you to knock the rust off and get back to gigging.

Condensing Your Kit

There's no reason why you should still be hauling around a kit that would herniate Mike Portnoy's drum tech. Think "downsize." I'm convinced that dealing with too much equipment contributes to burnout and a possible exit from the world of playing. Other than the obvious solution of paring down to a four-piece kit plus a basic cymbal setup, consider the following alternatives.

Cocktail drums. The modern cocktail kit usually includes a tall, floor tom–type drum with a bottom head that's played like a bass drum by means of a special pedal that flips the beater up to make contact. A poppy 8" snare and a 10" rack tom are often attached to the side, along with a rod that holds a closed hi-hat. Several major manufacturers offer variations on the cocktail kit theme, and a smaller company called Metropolitan Cocktail Drums (www.metrodrum.com) specializes in them. For more about cocktail kits visit www.cocktaildrum.com.

Electronic drums. Although my wife has deemed them "butt ugly," my low-end electronics have served me well. When I

Illustration by Jeff Harrity

When I first started marketing my freelance services, I assumed everyone would want a guy with almost forty-five years of experience. I was wrong.

arrive at the club, I carry the PVC rack—on which everything is mounted—on my shoulder, like one would carry a mountain bike. Then, basically I just plug in and play. Electronic kits of all budget ranges and sophistication levels are available at most full-service music stores and drumshops. Details can be researched on the Web sites of companies like Roland, Yamaha, Hart Dynamics, Pintech, and Alesis.

Shell-less kits. Companies such as Flats and Traps manufacture five-drum, shell-less kits (think RotoToms...sort of) that purport to put out a good sound and are easy to set up, tear down, and transport. The snare, rack and floor toms, bass drum, and cymbal stands are all mounted on a lightweight (PVC pipe or tubular chrome) rack. If you're interested, Google for a dealer or try them out at your local drum shop.

Compact kits. If you're wedded to a traditional-looking, four- or five-piece drumset, consider a compact kit. Essentially, most are simply scaled-down drums that get the job done. Google Gretsch Catalinas, Yamaha Hip-Gigs, Sonor Jungle sets, Taye Go-Kits, and Canopus Bop Kits for a look at just a few varieties.

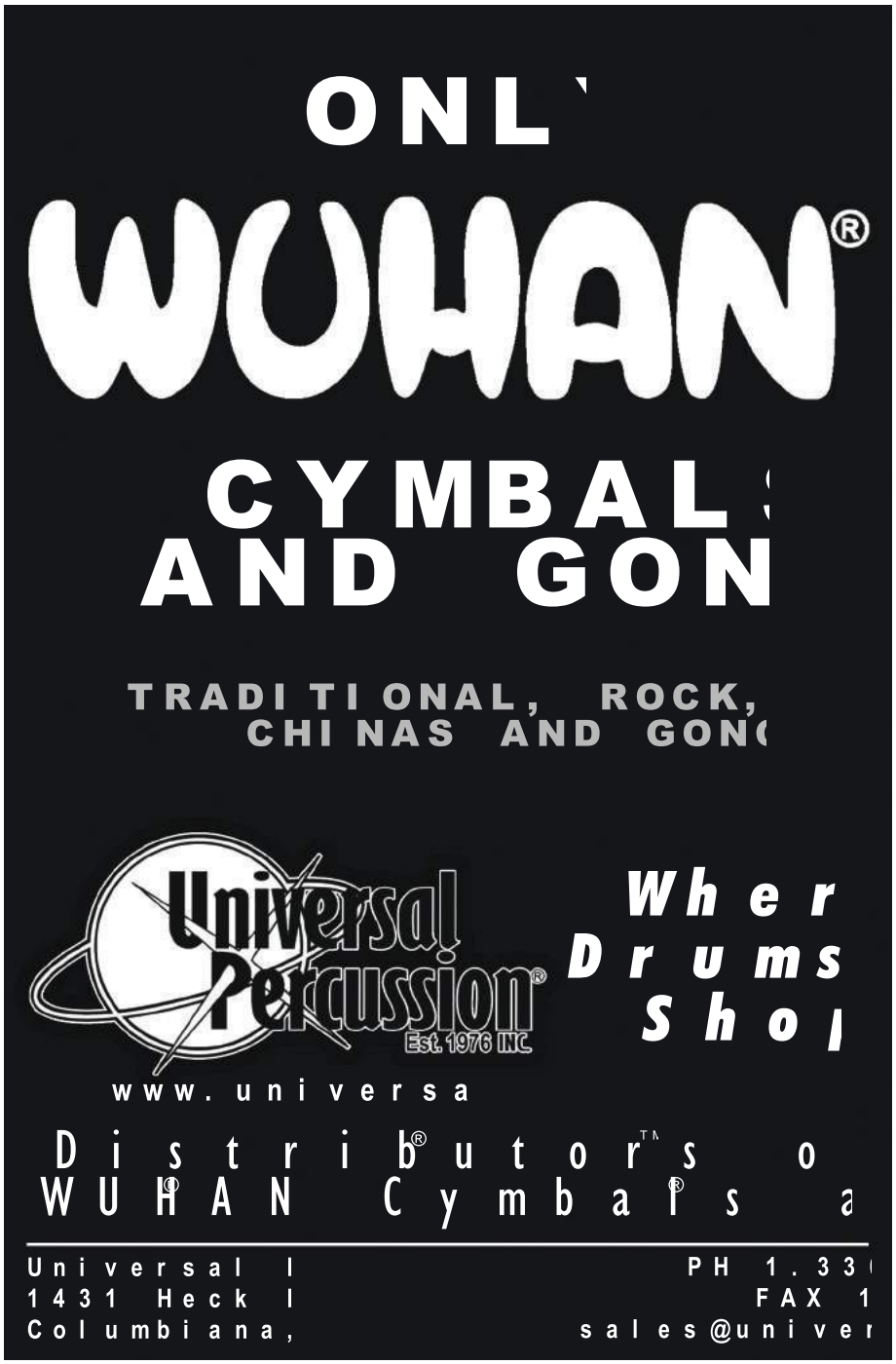
Diversifying

When I was in my mid-forties, I had a steady gig in a wedding band. The money was good, the hours tolerable (afternoons or early evenings), plus we got a decent rubber-chicken dinner. But I grew tired of the lime-green tuxedo shirts and the pedestrian material. I was warned more than once by the bandleader that "Feelings" shouldn't be played with a reggae beat. And I stopped celebrating "Celebration" after I'd cranked it out one too many times.

So I left the band and took a six-month hiatus, after which I realized how much I missed drums and drumming. Still, I yearned for something different—a change-up of sorts. That's when I found hand drums.

After purchasing an entry-level set of congas for less than $200, I took a few lessons from a local percussionist and spent time in self-study via videos. From there I moved on to djembes and doumbeks. Along my new percussion path I was always picking up shakers, tambourines, cowbells, and whatever "exotic" piece of equipment seemed to catch my eye.

If you're thinking of coming back to the fold, or if you're growing weary of playing drumkit, consider experimenting with hand percussion. Go entry-level, however, just in case hand drumming proves not to be your thing.



Band Versus Freelancing

About four years ago I was playing with an acoustic cover band. We were all in our fifties, and we all liked the same music. This band was good, with great playing and excellent three-part harmonies.

Unfortunately, one afternoon the bandleader (we' ll call him " Barry") had a stroke that temporarily paralyzed his left side. We had to cancel some gigs, but he recovered quickly. After six weeks, he wanted to rehearse. I came to rehearsal that night expecting to get back into the groove.

" Too loud!" Barry kept yelling at me—a phrase I' d never heard from him in practice or performance. " Too loud!" —even when I played the song on congas, tapping out the rhythms ever so softly. At rehearsal' s end, Barry explained that since having the stroke he absolutely hated the sound of drums—any drums—in a song. I was stunned, but I handled the experience as a professional. I packed my gear, said my good-byes, and the following day I entered the world of freelancing.

After connecting with other musicians through an arts & entertainment weekly newspaper, I had soon learned the repertoires of two duos and two solo acts. My status with these musicians was as follows: If I was available, I' d be there. Otherwise, they' d carry on as before. I was the added spice in their musical mix.

By making the switch from full band to freelance percussionist, I no longer had to deal with the " dysfunctional family" dynamics that can develop in bands. If I can play a given engagement, I do, and I have a ball in the process. But there' s no longer the " committed relationship" that comes with a band. So if you find yourself a wee bit disenchanted with your band, consider freelancing as a refreshing option.

Dealing With Ageism

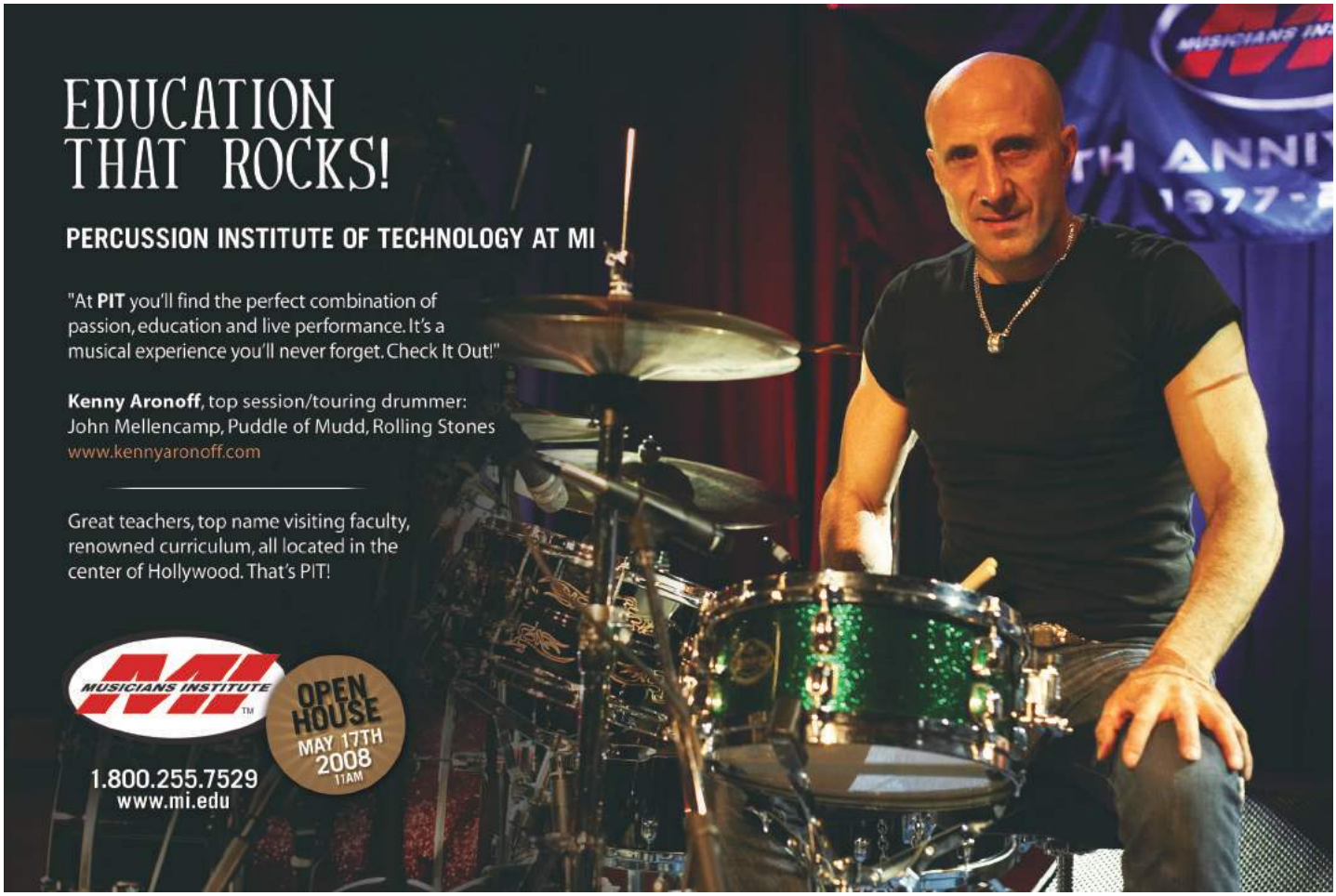
When I first started marketing my freelance services, I assumed everyone would want a guy with almost forty-five years of experience. I was wrong. Ageism exists.

Here' s a snippet of what a twenty-something female solo artist told me: " Uh, you' re like my father' s age! Sorry, but it would creep me out having some old guy behind me playing congas. Don' t take this wrong, but I' d feel like you' d be checking out my ass all night long."

They might not call you " Pops" or " Gramps," but no matter how great a drummer you are, some younger musicians might think you' re simply an old fart, ready for the rocker. Here' s how to deal with that:

First, remind yourself of what these little dweebs are missing out on—your groove, your versatility, your reliability. Second, structure auditions on a " mutual" basis. They' re checking you out, but you' re checking them out, too. Would you really want to perform with them? Do you like the tunes? Are they at the same level of musicianship as you? Do you perceive them as easy to work with, or are you sensing prima donnas?

I' m not saying that there is always prejudice on the part of a younger musician towards an older drummer. There are plenty of young players who will appreciate your hard-earned years of experience. For example, on a break one night, the twenty-five-year-old female in a boyfriend-girlfriend duo told me, " I always feel more comfortable when you' re backing us up. When we speed up, you reel us in; when we slow down, you gently kick us in the butt. You always seem relaxed and like you' re having a great time, and that helps me with my



stage nerves. On the nights you' re hired to play with us, I just feel so much lighter and happier." Pretty gratifying.

Clubs Versus Coffeehouses

If you' re tired of drunken patrons and 3:00 A.M. load-outs in blinding snowstorms, consider coffeehouses. However, realize that if you want to make this switch, you can' t be hauling in your double bass kit, concert toms, and thirty-nine cymbals. Usually only hand drums and small percussion toys are permitted in coffeehouses.

Coffeehouses might not pay much, if anything. (Although a few I' ve played paid as well as clubs.) Often, it' s a tip cup at the edge of the stage. However, the hours are usually earlier and shorter than in clubs. The cash might not be there, but the atmosphere is mellow and relaxed, the aromas of the brewing javas are delicious, and overall it' s a very pleasant environment in which to make music.

Physical And Mental Training

Drumming is a very strenuous activity, and for an over-fifty-five drummer to stay in form you' ll need to have some sort of workout program. (Note: Always check with your physician before beginning any exercise program.) Think cardio plus strength training. I' ve found Justin Spencer' s Fitness For Drummers DVD (Hal Leonard) to be an excellent resource.

Speaking of DVDs, what have you done lately to build your mental muscle and increase your musical skills base? A young singer/songwriter friend of mine recently self-produced a CD and used a drummer the studio had recommended. The guy was very experienced and—yep—in his fifties. My friend was dissatisfied with the end product, and he pointed the finger of blame at the drummer. " The guy was a great timekeeper," he said, " but it was like his sound and his feel were stuck in the ' 70s."

The moral of that story is that if you want to play in the current market, you have to keep growing and evolving. With all the educational DVDs available today, you can have A-list pros teaching you the latest drum and percussion styles in your living room. These " lessons" are inexpensive, and you can replay them as often as you like.

Age-Related Limitations

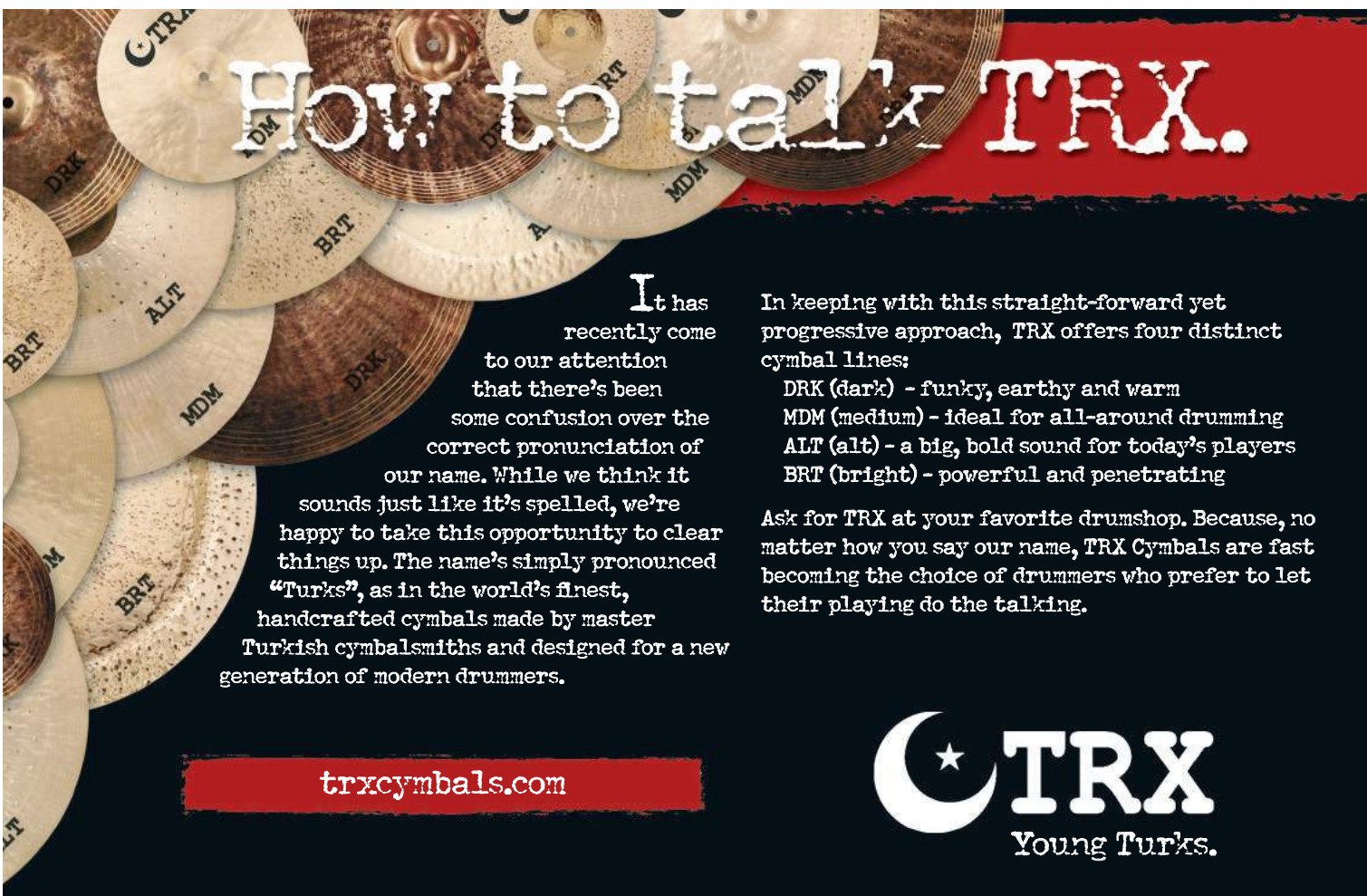
As I mentioned earlier, I had a bandleader who had a paralyzing stroke in his fifties. He was lucky; he walked away from it. Many folks our age don' t.

I suffer from age-related arthritis, primarily in my hands. Fortunately, my rheumatologist recommends hand drumming as the best medicine for me, and I follow her prescription daily.

Body parts weaken or wear out, and nobody lives forever. That' s why it' s so important to follow our bliss, pursue our passions, and play through or with any age-related limitations.

So don' t set yourself any other limitations. Don' t give up, and don' t be hesitant. Just play. Today.

A drummer since the age of fourteen, **Bernie Schallehn** has performed with countless bands and solo artists. He is also a versatile hand percussionist, proficient in most forms of music. He's performed everywhere from bars, nightclubs, and coffeehouses to a concert for a US vice president. Bernie also has recording experience as a guest artist on several CDs.



Building A Successful Teaching Practice

Part 6: Maintain And Expand

by Robert P. Smith

So you've finally done it! You started your teaching practice, you quit your day job, and you're following your true bliss. Now what?

Well, one option is to sit back, relax, and keep everything just the way it is. Or, you can be proactive and start searching for other avenues to expand your business into while you make sure your current numbers stay steady. In the business world, there's a theory that says the time to enact change is when you're at your most successful. Now is the time to experiment with different ways of marketing your practice, different styles of teaching, and different instruments to teach.

Truly successful businesses invest in research and development in order to ensure that they stay on top of the market and keep a clear vision of where they want to be in the next few years. It's extremely dangerous to assume that your business, now established, will just keep coasting along. Demographics change, students get older and move away, and economies slump, making music lessons a "luxury" (and usually the first thing chopped out of the budget). Too many good businesses have gone under because of a lack of foresight. Here are some things to help you avoid that.

Crunch The Numbers

You might have noticed that from week to week your numbers fluctuate by a student or two. This is normal, and usually when one is out, another comes in. Over the long haul, however, your numbers might dip because you lose students without replenishing with new ones. This could happen for many reasons—graduation, economy, or even a shift in music interest by the populace. (I call this the American Idol effect: Everyone wants to be a singer!) You need to set up a plan to keep your name out there and add one or two new students on a regular basis. I'm not talking about trying to score twenty new students in one shot (that would cause problems unto itself), but rather keeping your average number of students steady.

Creative Use Of Resources

One plan I came up with was turning students into recruiters. I offer an incentive for current students: Give me one referral to a new student and get a free lesson. This has worked wonders with students and their parents. The thought of receiving a free lesson from a teacher they're already satisfied with can be incredibly motivating. Also, if students really enjoy their lessons with you, they get the feeling of contributing to something worthwhile. Meanwhile, you not only get an agent working for you, but also the most valuable endorsement in our business: word-of-mouth recommendation. You might even find yourself creating a waiting list for new prospective students. If parents and students think you're worth it, they'll wait for an opening in your schedule.

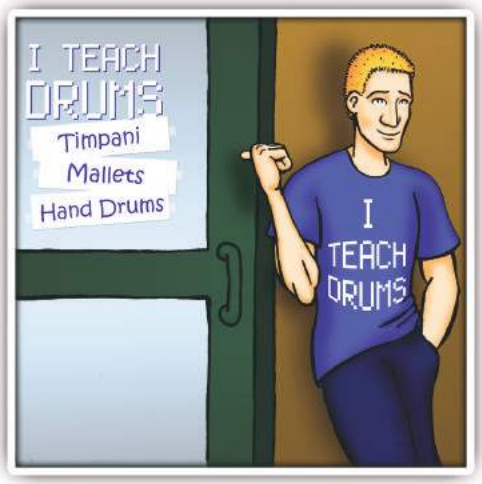


Illustration by Jeff Harrity

It' s extremely dangerous to assume that your business, now established, will just keep coasting along. Too many good businesses have gone under because of a lack of foresight.

Broaden Your Territory

Are all your students from the same school district or town? Try looking in other areas. Contact the band director of a different school district, and try to get one or two students on an off day (Saturday morning, for example). Start making inroads into this new area. It could take several months to establish a decent schedule, so be patient and keep working at it. Be sensible about the geography, however. You don' t want to drive an hour for a half-hour lesson just to start in a new area.

Go Where The People Are

Seek out areas where communities congregate, such as libraries, community centers, and houses of worship. Offer to put on a master class in drumming, or a drum circle. Better yet, set up a recital by some of your students so everyone can see the great work you' re doing. Remember to have plenty of promotional items and give-aways: drumsticks, stickers, business cards—whatever they can take home with them so they' ll remember their experience.

If you don' t recognize anyone at the recital, you need to evaluate your standing in your community. Are you well known amongst your neighbors, or do you only come outside to pick up your newspaper? Get involved with the local PTA, start a neighborhood watch group, or join a committee! (And remember an earlier suggestion: Volunteer at your local school to judge competitions.) Your stock will rise and you' ll be contributing to your community. Just make sure everyone knows what you do for a living.

Get Creative

This ties in with becoming more inventive with your marketing. The traditional printed flyer on the wall generally doesn' t produce great results. However, many communities have small local papers that run stories on local businesses. That' s you! Contact a staff writer, play up your community involvement, and try to get a story written about yourself and the great things you' re doing with your students. Use that story to promote your recitals.

If there' s a small business bureau or chamber of commerce in your town, join it. The contacts you make with other businesses can greatly impact your own. Many teachers tend to forget that they are business people as well as musicians. You need to get in the business mindset when developing your teaching practice. Do what other businesses do: Network. Connect with other private teachers in your area (if for nothing else, then for the great stories you can tell each other). I' ve received many referrals from fellow instructors who teach other instruments.

Diversify

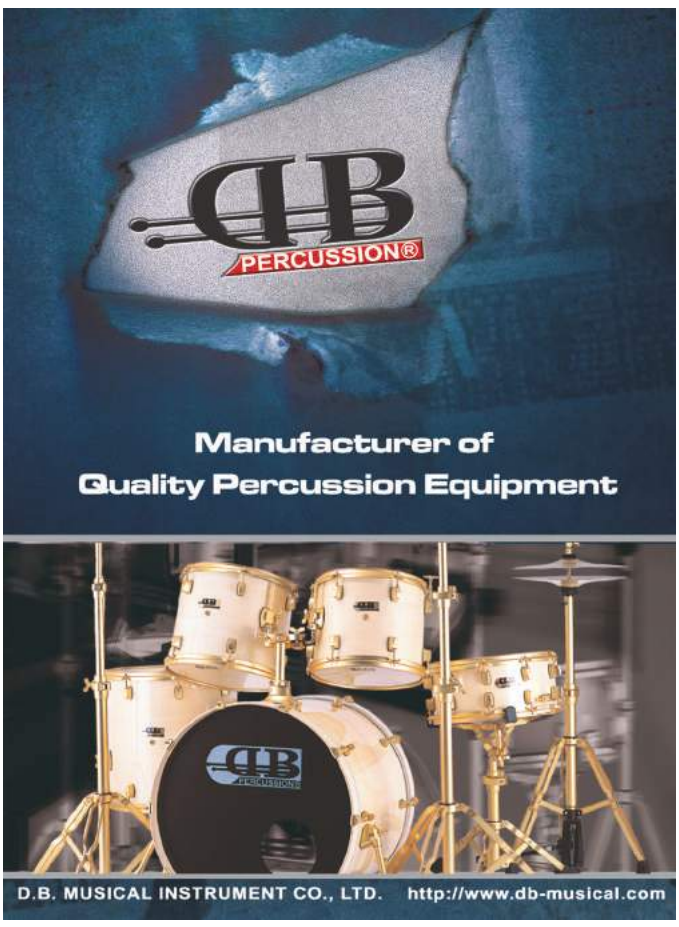
This brings me to my last point: Play another instrument. I' ve seen so many drum teachers lose students because they cannot teach mallets, timpani, congas, or other percussion instruments. I know, I know.... It' s hard enough finding time to practice your main instrument. But I believe that learning another instrument makes you better on your main instrument.

Case in point: I had the opportunity to grow my business exponentially if, at the request of a local band director, I would teach mallets and timpani as well as snare and drumset. I immediately picked up a marimba and started practicing, while taking lessons myself for mallets and timpani. After I shed my tail off for a few months, I added ten new students. As word got around, the number jumped even higher. Not only has expanding to these other instruments improved my teaching business, but now I get calls for a wide variety of gigs on them. My knowledge of music theory has expanded, I never get lost when playing jazz tunes because I can hear things much clearer, and my soloing is more melodic. Best of all, it' s a heck of a lot of fun!

More Beyond

Every challenge you face is an opportunity. Never be afraid to try something new in your business ventures. This is how trends are made. Be open-minded when opportunities present themselves. Your business will grow, your musicianship will grow, and you' ll probably end up meeting and making a lot of new friends. My favorite maxim is " plus ultra," which is Latin for " more beyond." There are no limits.

Rob Smith is a graduate of Temple University in jazz performance. He maintains a successful private teaching practice in the Philadelphia area. He also performs in various jazz groups and big bands, records commercial jingles, and works with such artists as St. Alborne, Mike Montrey, and The Helots. You can contact Rob at jabondo@msn.com.



Drum Triggers

Tools To Augment Or Replace Your Acoustic Sound

by John Emrich

Roland RT-10T tom trigger

It' s become very common in today' s popular music to use electronic triggers to augment or replace an acoustic drum sound. Triggers allow you to use your acoustic drums to play sounds in an electronic drum module, or to play various VST instruments, loops, or non-drum samples that you have stored on your computer.

In this article, we' ll explore some basic triggering concepts. Then we' ll take a look at some other things to consider when using triggers on a gig.

Placement Is Key

Almost every drum trigger on the market uses a small piezo-electric sensor to generate a signal. These sensors are made from either ceramic or crystal. You can think of a piezo as two parallel plates. When a vibration occurs (from hitting the drumhead), the plates move closer together. That change in spacing creates an electrical signal that tells a trigger-to-MIDI device to play a sound or event.

Triggers come in many different forms. Companies like ddrum, Pintech, and Roland offer drum triggers that mount onto the rim of the drum. Some of these are also dual-zone triggers that allow you to play two sounds, one that' s triggered by hitting the head and another from the rim. Dual-zone triggers are great for snare drums, but you could also use them on your toms.

Other triggers attach directly to the drum. These can be mounted to the head or to the shell. The type and size of drum being used, as well as the sensitivity of the trigger itself, determines how you mount these types of piezos. For example, you may be able to mount a trigger to the shell of an 8" tom, but the same trigger placement might not work as well on an 18" floor tom. You have to experiment to find out what works best with your drums.

There are several different methods you can use to attach a trigger to a drum. Tape will work, but it will loosen up over time. Clear silicon is a better alternative. Not only does it keep the trigger securely in place, but it also creates a small buffer between the head and the trigger. This can prevent cross-talk, which often occurs when triggers pick up vibrations from other sound sources.

When you' re placing triggers on your drums, be sure they aren' t in a spot where they could be easily hit with your sticks. Also, take a look at the sound module or trigger-to-MIDI device that you' re going to use. The module' s trigger parameters influence how you mount the triggers to your drums. Different trigger-to-MIDI devices will have different capabilities, so you' ll need to take them into account in order for your triggers to perform properly.

When Things Go Awry

If your triggers are missing notes or playing more sounds than you intended, you need to either adjust their placement on the drums or fine-tune the settings in your trigger-to-MIDI device. First, look at your device' s threshold and rejection settings. Double triggering (two sounds playing after one hit) can happen for a couple of reasons. If the threshold and rejection settings are too low, the bounce of the drumhead will cause the piezo to generate one signal when you hit the drum and another when the head returns to its natural position. Ambient vibration from other instruments or from speakers can also cause extra hits. If you experience double triggers, bring up the levels of these two settings gradually until each stroke fires a single sound. There' s a fine line between having a nice dynamic response and risking double triggering. So take your time and make adjustments incrementally.

Now that we have a basic understanding of what triggers are and

how to mount them, let' s take a look at some ways to put them to use.

Reinforcement

Unfortunately, not all nightclubs have a high-quality sound system for us to play through. For the clubbing drummer, adding triggers to your acoustic drums can help you get a professional and consistent sound in any environment.

For example, getting a good bass drum sound in a club that only has a couple of beat-up mics can be tricky. Plus, the PA system needs to be able to produce a lot of low-end energy to give you a chest-thumping kick sound. But low frequencies can be difficult to tame, and boosting them too high can result in a lot of low-end rumble. These frequencies need to be controlled and punchy, yet still loud enough to work with the music.

If the PA system is not quite up to snuff, or if there are a lot of other instruments on stage that can bleed into the bass drum mic, you might want to consider using a trigger. A trigger (controlling an external sound module) will allow you to get a punchy bass drum sound that will not pick up any bleed from other instruments.

Triggers also come in handy when the sound system is underpowered. Triggered sounds don' t need to be boosted as much as acoustic sounds in order to give you the desired reinforcement. You can also send the triggered bass drum sound into your monitoring system to help you keep your groove feeling strong.

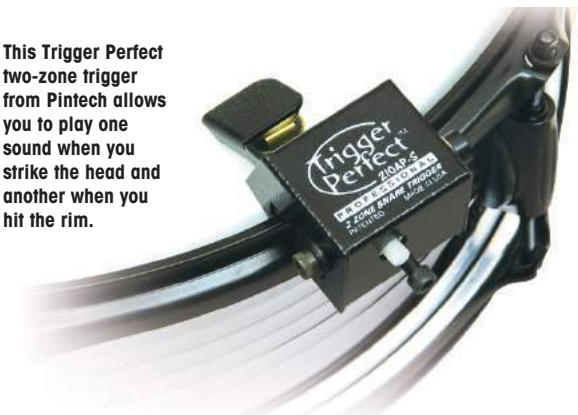
Triggering toms will allow you to get a clear sound without adding more microphones, which run the risk of picking up more bleed from guitars and other instruments. And if your sound module has built-in processing, you can use the triggers to add reverb and other effects to your sound.

Pintech's RS-5 triggers have an adhesive attached to the underside, and the Trigger Trap allows for adhesive-free mounting options.

don' t recommend replacing an acoustic snare drum with a trigger, because all of the little ghost notes will get lost. However, you can blend in a triggered sound with your acoustic snare to add something subtle to your backbeat, like a tambourine sample.

Replacement

Imagine a heavy metal band playing with a small electronic kit on stage. Something seem out of place? Most rock bands require the look of a real drumset in order to give off the right vibe, even if the sound of the electronic drums is closer to what' s on the band' s latest CD. You can have the best of both worlds by using triggers to play more processed sounds from your acoustic kit. In fact, many major touring acts use triggers to reproduce sounds from their latest studio recordings. In extreme cases, some artists will even forgo any



This Trigger Perfect two-zone trigger from Pintech allows you to play one sound when you strike the head and another when you hit the rim.

This Pulse Percussion Red Hot trigger has been glued (with silicon) directly to the drumhead.

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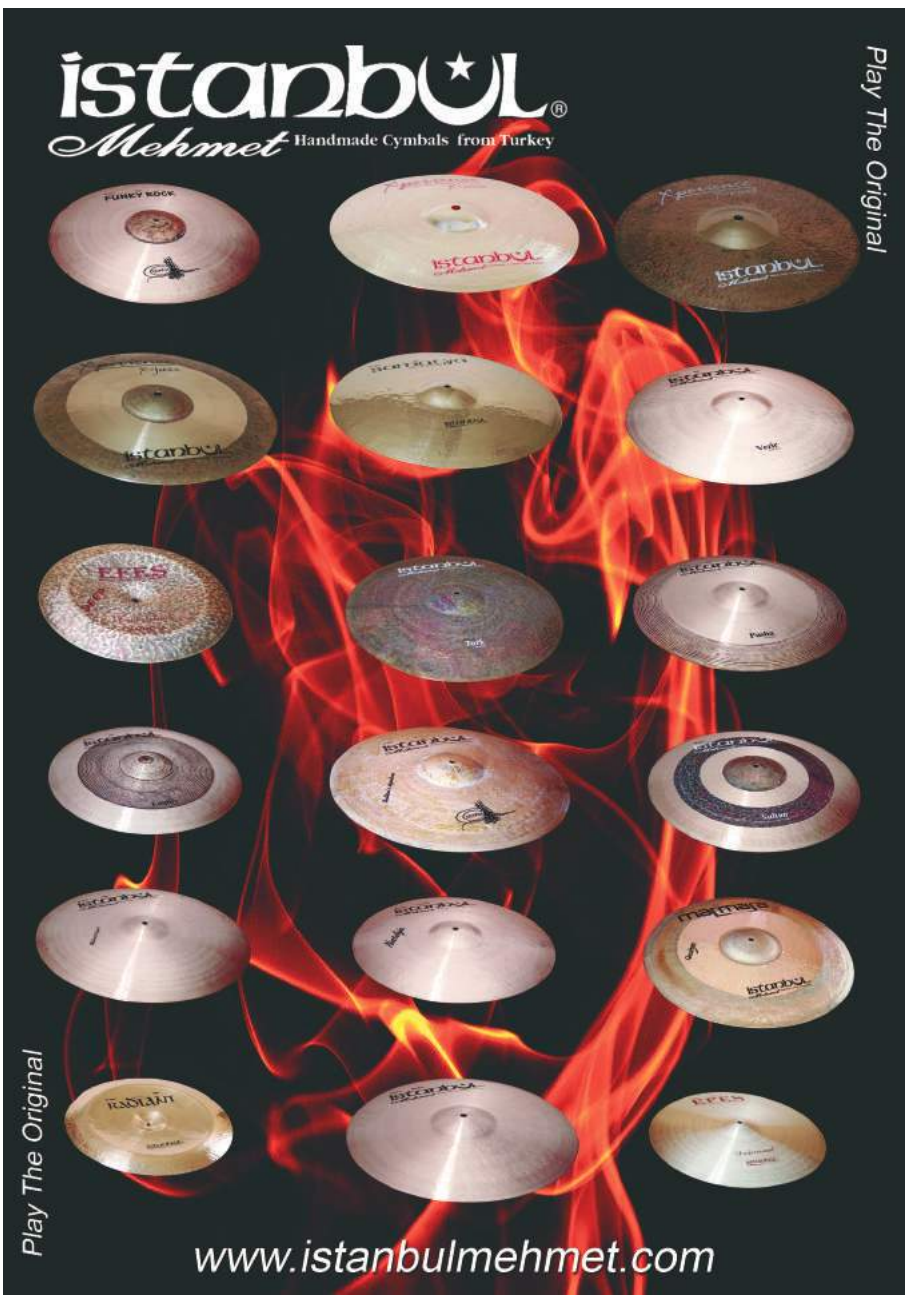
stage microphones and opt to only use triggered sounds. And some metal drummers play so fast that the sound system isn't able to process the signals from the microphones fast enough. So they rely on triggers to give clarity to their performances.

Sound replacement is often a great choice for drummers on low-budget tours who have to use a different drumset each night. In this case, triggers allow you to get a consistent drum sound, regardless of the quality of the instrument.

Creating Something Strange

Modern music often features an element of surprise. And there's always someone out there trying to push the envelope. Using triggers is a great way to discover new sounds, by either modifying or destroying your basic drum sound. For instance, you can add effects to create melodic and harmonic movement to complement a tune, or to kick it into a new direction. This is where VST instruments excel. Software instruments allow you to capitalize on the power and flexibility of a computer to get very creative with your drum sound. But even if you're just sending the triggered sound into a simple guitar pedal, the results are sure to inspire you in new and unusual ways.



Monitoring

Whenever you discuss triggers, you must also address your monitoring system. Remember that a trigger responds to vibration. Most club sound systems have a huge stack of speakers next to the drum riser. If you're not careful, these monitors can wreak havoc on your triggers. Here are a few things to think about when dealing with stage monitors.

First off, never point the speakers directly into the drumset. If you absolutely must have a large monitor next to you, resist the temptation to crank it. At loud volumes, your ears might not be able to detect double triggering—but your audience will.

You also want to keep your stage volume from getting too loud. If the sound coming from the stage is very hot, the house engineer has to push the PA level in order to get the lead singer to be heard. This generally results in a poor mix. A softer stage volume will give the engineer more room to give your band the best possible presentation. (And your ears—as well as your career—will last longer when the volume is under control.)

You might also want to explore various in-ear monitor options for your personal mix. This is the best way to hear everything without killing your ears.

The Final Mix

It's important that you, the acoustic/electronic drummer, are in control of the mix that gets sent to the club's sound system. After all, only you know the exact results that you're trying to achieve. If you're only using a single sound module to trigger a few sounds (kick and snare), you might be able to simply send the soundman a direct signal from the outputs of your device. But if you're using a lot of different devices and/or effects to build your sound, you might want to consider putting together a small system that enables you to have a little more control.

We'll dig into what you'll need for a full-blown drummer-friendly sound system in the next article. Until then....

John Emrich is a professional drummer/producer based in the Washington, DC area. As a sound engineer, he has produced two expansion packs for Fxpansion's software drum module BFD. He can be reached at www.johnemrich.com.

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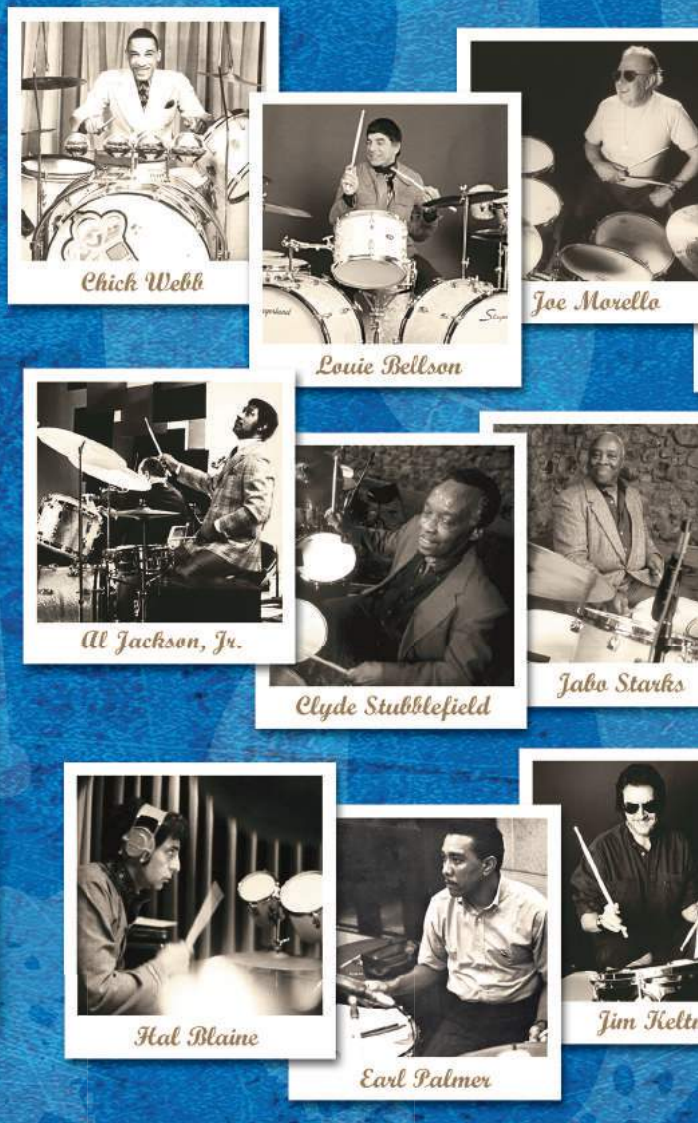

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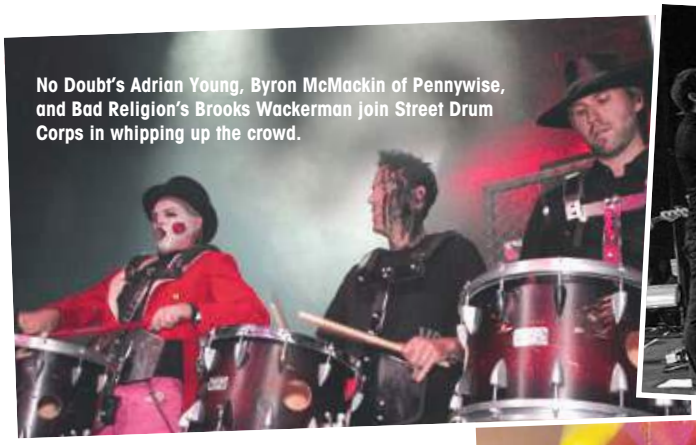
Behind The Scenes Of A Major Drumming Event

Though it only takes place over the course of several hours on one night each year, Guitar Center's annual Drum-Off Grand Finals event is far more than just a single concert. In fact, it really is a major undertaking, with thousands of drummers nationwide competing for the honor of being named the grand champion. The final night of competition is also loaded with several drumming-related components that keep percussion-savvy audiences pouring back into the Music Box at the Henry Fonda Theater in Hollywood, California each year. And the 2007 Grand Finals, which took place on January 5, 2008, was no exception to the rule of this now nearly twenty-year-old event.

In fact, from the large-draw headliner—alternative rock act Angels & Airwaves, fronted by former Blink-182 vocalist/guitarist Tom DeLonge—to the creative drummers featured in the Grand Finals solo competition, this year's show was definitely worth writing home (or in this case, writing in a drumming magazine) about. The event was coordinated in large part by Guitar Center's Dustin Hinz, company vice president Mark Nelson, and the Guitar Center support crew, who spent nearly an entire year making this one a reality.

By Waleed Rashidi



No Doubt's Adrian Young, Byron McMackin of Pennywise, and Bad Religion's Brooks Wackerman join Street Drum Corps in whipping up the crowd.

Angels And Airwaves' Tom DeLonge.

Street Drum Corps

The Performers

Opening this year's installment were punk-ish percussion outfit Street Drum Corps, who were making their second appearance at the event. The group, founded by drummers Bobby Alt, Adam Alt, and Frank Zummo, had made some seriously awesome changes to its stage show in comparison to last year's performance. Though the three primary players were still fully integrated in the show, they were significantly aided and abetted by a host of phenomenal drumming talent, including Bad Religion's Brooks Wackerman, Stomp's John Sawicki, 30 Seconds To Mars' Shannon Leto, and No Doubt's Adrian Young. Also stepping out from behind the kit was Pennywise's Byron McMackin, who instead was situated front and center for part of the show with a marching snare strapped to his shoulders.

"I got this idea while laying in my bunk during the Warped Tour," Zummo says. "We opened up the Drum-Off last year, but it was a very limited set, more of a last-minute thing. So this year I sat down with Guitar Center's Dustin Hinz, and said that this was what I was thinking: Street Drum Corps with like five or six special guest drummers. We'd do an epic drum show with a set. And he said, 'Great!'"

This year Zummo and company expanded their usual instrumentation of recycled items with a pair of standard drumkits and an array of pipes and other metallic noisemakers strapped to a large chain link fence. The act even featured live vocals at one point during their high-energy set.

"We had almost every percussive instrument ever made on that stage," Zummo says. "Everything was brand-new and custom made. Orange County Drums built us an acrylic kit and a wood kit in the weirdest, craziest sizes. They even built us marching drums—which they don't normally make—gong drums, octobans.... We had electronics on stage. And we had a staging company build us a wall made out of trash. It had all kinds of motorcycle parts, garbage cans, and barrels attached for us to play."

After kicking off the show with bowls played on the rim, "singing" wine glass style, the SDC launched into a tremendous cacophony with sampled interludes and incredible visuals, which included the gratuitous use of face paint and creative costumes. A drum line featuring Young and McMackin on matched grip and Wackerman on traditional grip rocked a forceful cadence with killer vented marching snare drums. Zummo said the band spent a week rehearsing, with intense ten-

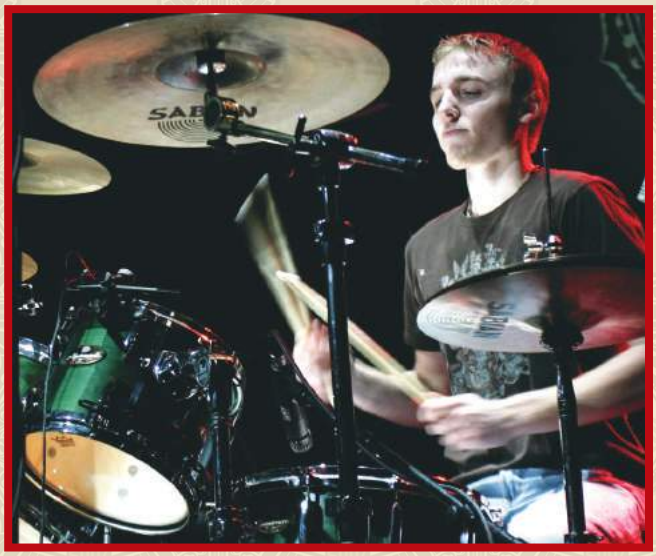
"THERE ARE A LOT OF REALLY GOOD DRUMMERS IN THE BUILDING TONIGHT. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE."—ATOM WILLARD

Drummers hang: Adrian Young, Atom Willard, winner Donnie Marple, Stephen Perkins, Byron McMackin, Brooks Wackerman

Spotlighting The 2007 Drum-Off Grand Finalists

Drum-Off Winner Donnie Marple

East Region (Store: Towson, Maryland)



"I didn't even know about the competition until this year, when one of my friends told me," said twenty-year-old Keyser, West Virginia resident Donnie Marple, winner of the 2007 Drum-Off competition. Facing a group of experienced competitors, Marple was in fact the only finalist who had never been involved in the Drum-Off—or any other drum competition, for that matter. Apparently the lack of competitive experience had nothing to do with winning or losing the event.

"This has taken me on one heck of a ride," says Marple. "It's been a blessing." The jazz-based drummer and college music major credits his faith for getting him this far—especially given the fact that he's never had a lesson on a drumset. Marple started drumming at the age of three, tinkering on the drums at his church. He was subsequently raised on a diet of outstanding drumming influences including Dave Weckl, Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Dennis Chambers, Steve Smith, Thomas Lang, and David Garibaldi, and today admits to taking "a little bit from every drummer" on the scene.

"This was the best show I ever played in my life," he said backstage at the Fonda, post-performance. "I couldn't have been any happier. I hit exactly what I wanted to hit, and I did everything I wanted to do. There were a couple of tempo things that I had problems with, and that's just because of the adrenaline. That's going to happen."

Some of Marple's most impressive moves during his finals performance were his stick tricks, which whipped the crowd into a frenzy. So where did he come up with some of these visual ideas? "I've learned from many drummers," he says. "I've seen Steve Smith do some of these things—though I had no clue he'd be here tonight! But my visual stuff was also inspired by the movie *Drumline*. I don't like to copy things exactly, but I like to learn from everybody. That's what you're supposed to do as a drummer.

"I wanted my solo to be musical," Marple continues, "and I also wanted to incorporate the stick tricks—as long as they didn't take away from what I was playing. That's the secret with stick tricks: You can't stop and start a stick trick, you have to make it fluid and flow within the solo."

While acknowledging that the competition was fierce and that he had tremendous respect for his peers, Marple hypothesized about what gave him the eventual nudge towards victory. "I would have to say that I nailed my solo," he says, simply. "The musicality, the originality, some of my tricks…I got the crowd into it—and it all added up."

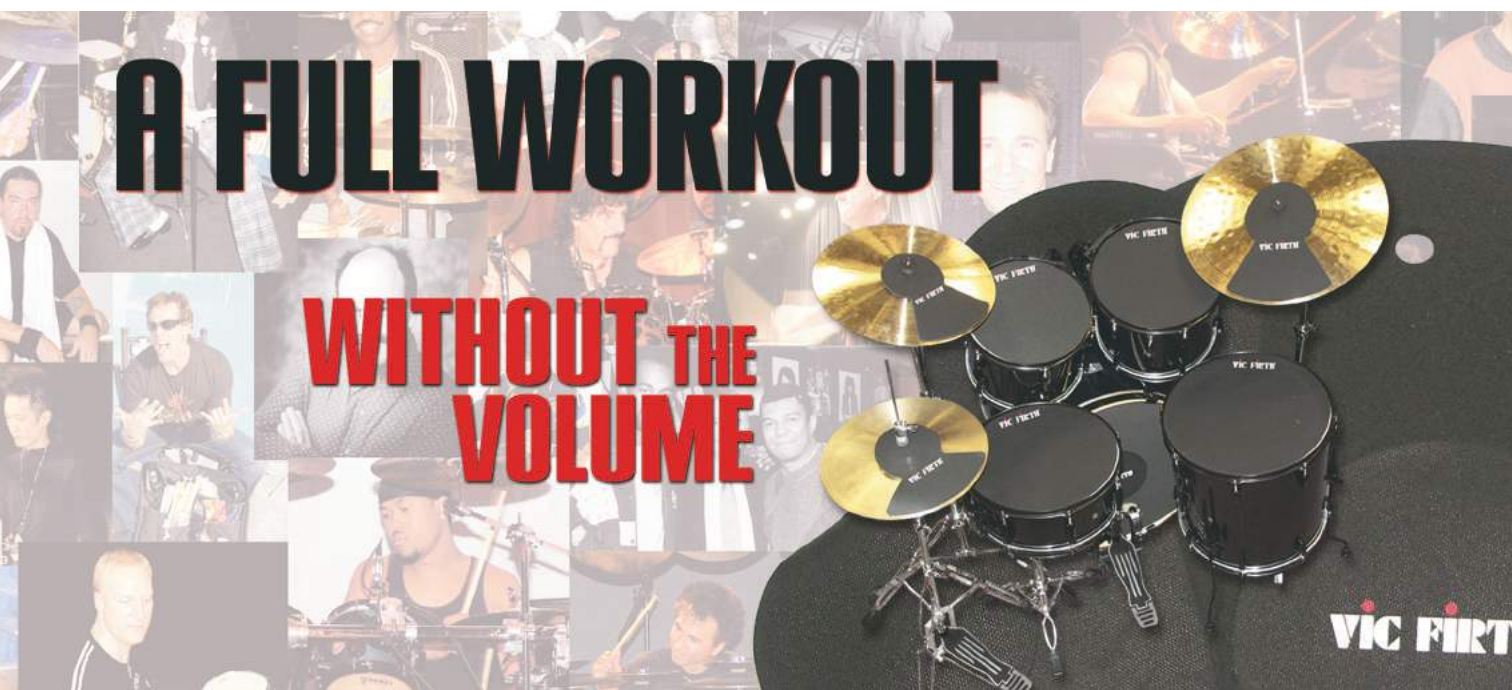
And what about the drummer's future, now that he's been crowned the winner of the competition? "I'm just going to let God take control of my life, and stay on a straight path," Marple says. "To be the top drummer, well, it's a dream come true. The universe is ahead of me. I'm going to have a new life after this. It's like winning *American Idol*. And now I have no clue. I'm just going to take the best offer that comes my way, and I'm going to keep my head on straight the whole time."

And though Marple's newfound position has opened numerous opportunities for his future, he's making sure that some things in his life stay the same. "One thing that doesn't change is my love for my family, my fiancée, and God. That's one thing that's never going to change."

hour sessions, and the hard work paid off.

Young was easily the star of the ensemble, with his ringmaster outfit and his taste for theatrics on full display. He even indulged in non-drumming activities, like mixing drinks on a gas-powered margarita mixer that was operated via a motorcycle-style throttle grip. And the entire percussive assault ended with Young attempting to destroy the inventive instrumentation with his golf clubs (even teeing off a few fake golf balls in the interim).

"I want to do this again—I enjoyed myself so much," Young says of his performance with the Street Drum Corps. "I think this is a Vegas production, and I want to be involved if it goes there. But, I broke a golf club after I hit the first thing with it, and that wasn't intentional. The shaft did the rest of the work, along with my feet. And I don't know how many mics I broke with it,



Paul Stoot Jr.
West Region (Store: Lynnwood, Washington)

Though he hadn't even completed high school before he made it as one of the Grand Finalists, seventeen-year-old Paul Stoot Jr. was already well-versed on all things Drum-Off, including how to succeed. That's because the Washington-based drummer had competed once before when he was fourteen, making it to his store's final round. Though Stoot claims he was "just doing it for fun the first time," a few years later he decided to take another stab at the competition. "I just wanted to see where I was at in drumming," he said. It didn't take long to find out—Stoot proved he was the best drummer from his Western region.

Stoot considers himself more of a Gospel drummer, though he also admits to enjoying healthy doses of funk, R&B, jazz, and pop-rock drumming too. His inspirations include Tony Royster Jr. and John Blackwell, as well as Roy Shorter, who won the Drum-Off competition a few years ago. Stoot won a four-year Bill Gates Scholarship, and plans to head to U.W. Seattle for two years and then attend two more years at the Berklee School Of Music in Boston.

A multi-instrumentalist, Stoot plays piano for his church and is currently working on the bass guitar. "I made it through this entire competition on faith, and that really helped me out," he says. "The Drum-Off is a very good experience. I love it."

Sherman Arnold
North Region (Store: Inglewood, Colorado)

There was a familiar face on stage during the Drum-Off Grand Finals, as forty-two-year-old Sherman Arnold had returned to Los Angeles for a third time for the chance to take home top honors. Arnold, the most experienced player in the competition, had participated in the Grand Finals in 1999 and 2005; the Denver-area based drummer even dropped his day job to make the time to play the event.

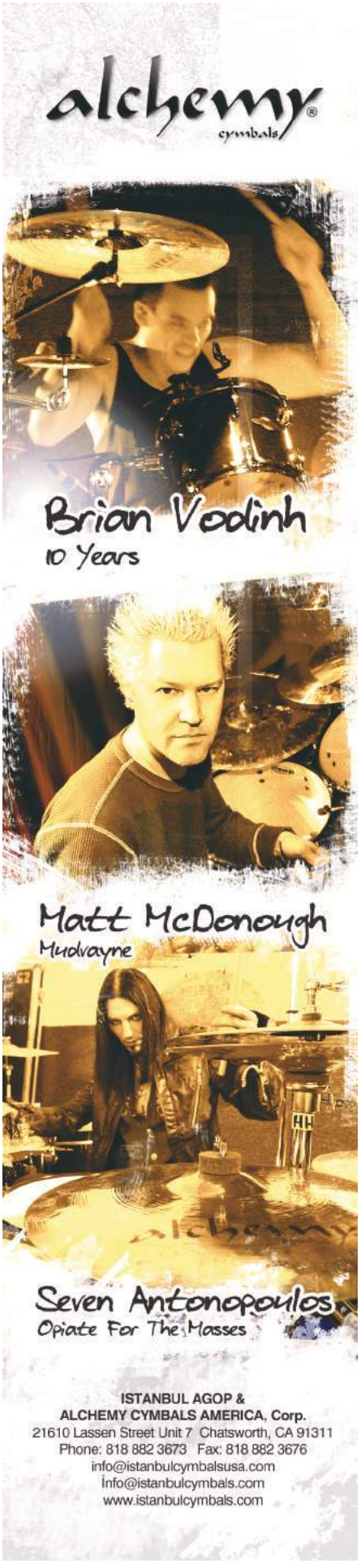
Arnold is married, with a seven-year-old son who's also taking cues from his father as an aspiring drummer. Sherman currently plays in his church band and freelances for artists in his area. His influences include Michael White, David Garibaldi, and Steve Smith, his strengths are in funk, Latin, and Gospel music, and in the future he hopes to work as a music producer.

Before his performance, Arnold told *MD*, "Each time I come here, I've got something nice for the crowd. But this time I'm also performing for the judges. I want to show my technique. But it's going to be *grooving*."

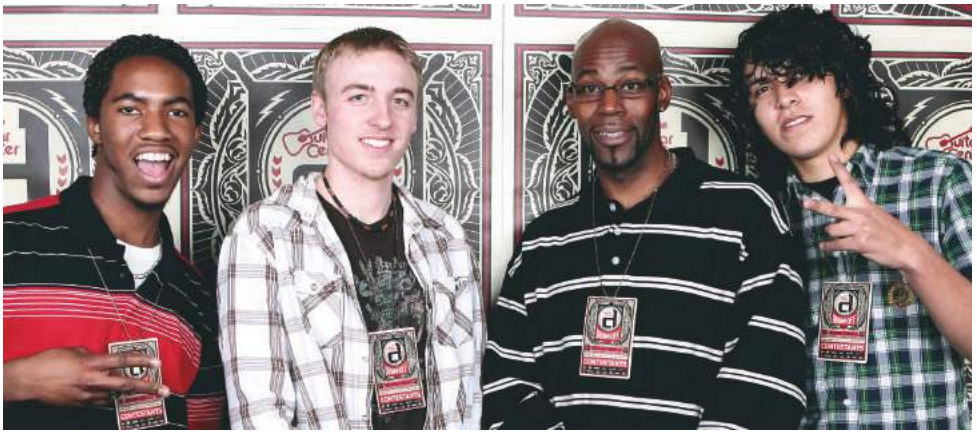
Ivan Garcia
South Region (Store: Chattanooga, Tennessee)

If there's one thing that makes good practice for a competition like the Drum-Off, it's learning to think on your feet. And twenty-year-old Ivan Garcia's probably got the right gig to prepare for the challenge, drumming for an improvisational musical project. Mentored by Alien Ant Farm drummer Mike Cosgrove, the Oglethorpe, Georgia–based Garcia got his start nearly a dozen years ago, performing in touring bands south of the border in his native Mexico.

This year's competition marked Garcia's fifth year of Drum-Off participation and his second Grand Finals appearance. (He was a finalist in 2004 as well.) Garcia, who was influenced by the Latin vibes of Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, as well as by Akira Jimbo and John Blackwell, said his aim this year was to become more melodic with his soloing, including more prominently using toms as a melodic element.



DRUM-OFF



Paul Stoot Jr., Donnie Marple, Sherman Arnold, and Ivan Garcia: Drum-Off '07's grand finalists

but I' m expecting a bill from Guitar Center!"

Event emcee Stephen Perkins—who had performed with his band Hellride during the 2006 Grand Finals event—kept things rolling through the course of the night, including introducing the induction ceremony for the Drum Legends Hall of Fame. Together with Yes' s Alan White, Perkins announced the Legend honorees of this year' s event: David Garibaldi, of Tower Of Power fame, and Steve Smith, of Journey and Vital Information. Smith, Garibaldi, and White also acted as judges for the forthcoming solo competition. The rest of the judges pool included Ray Luzier (Korn), Thomas Lang, Trevor Lawrence Jr. (Snoop Dogg), Vinny Appice (Black Sabbath, Dio), John Tempesta (The Cult), Joey Castillo (Queens Of The Stone Age), and Kenny Aronoff.

Bring On The Competitors

With the stage prepared, featuring two drumkits side by side, Perkins rallied the huge crowd into the finals competition. The competitors who were about to take the stage, all regional winners from across the country, were backstage, ready to go head to head.

First up was Paul Stoot Jr., representing the West region. The high school senior began his solo with a few tricky cross-sticking patterns, incorporating a liberal use of dynamics, all the while keeping his cool under the bright spotlights. Among the highlights of his solo were some incredible slow-motion body movement visuals, which generated a rousing reaction from the crowd. Stoot then moved into some heavy rock phrases, punctuated by an explosive finale of blurred rudiments across the toms. At his last note, Stoot jumped from the throne and coolly walked away.

Sherman Arnold, from the North region (who was familiar with the Grand Finals drill, having participated as a Drum-Off finalist twice before), took the stage and began with some substantial stick work. Arnold initially delivered a host of rapid one-handed phrases around the kit, and then mixed them with an equally impressive overhand/underhand technique. Arnold' s feet were also not to be ignored, flying amazing 16ths while he dazzled the audience with his bag of visual tricks. After incorporating the cowbell within his solo, Arnold ended his rousing performance with the familiar " shave and a haircut" pattern.

The East region was represented by Donnie Marple, who began his solo on the decidedly quieter end of the spectrum. In fact, Marple didn' t even use traditional sticks; rather, he came armed with a pair of Steve Smith signature Tala Wands, and kicked off his solo with a series of quick and quiet runs around the kit. Making the transition to sticks, Marple ramped up his performance with visual tricks like seamlessly " transporting" his sticks around his back and using lots of hand and arm crossovers. Marple capped his solo with a succession of cymbal chokes.

Ivan Garcia, another familiar face in the Grand Finals, rounded out the quartet of competitors representing the South region with a heavy groove-oriented approach. Ivan' s feel was looser than that of his rivals. Still, his performance seemed acutely charted, with transitions and movements that were creative, comfortable, and deliberate. Much like Arnold, Garcia made full use of the cowbell, linking it with tom patterns for a series of impressive phrases. Garcia wrapped up his solo with a quiet crash, signaling the end of the competition for the entire year.

But before the winner was announced, ?uestlove, star drummer with The Roots, brought his blazin' instrumental project Go Get A Late Pass on stage to perform a handful of awesome, down-and-dirty funk-rock numbers. Flanked by guitarist Captain Kirk and sousaphone player Tuba Gooding Jr., ?uestlove grooved through an

intense jam session of shredding solos, including one of his own.

At one point during the set, Gooding jumped into the crowd with the sousaphone while ?uestlove and Kirk held down the rhythms on stage. The entire improv-heavy set was kicked up to the next level with the introduction of world-renowned vocalist Nikka Costa, who joined the act for their final song.

Who Won?

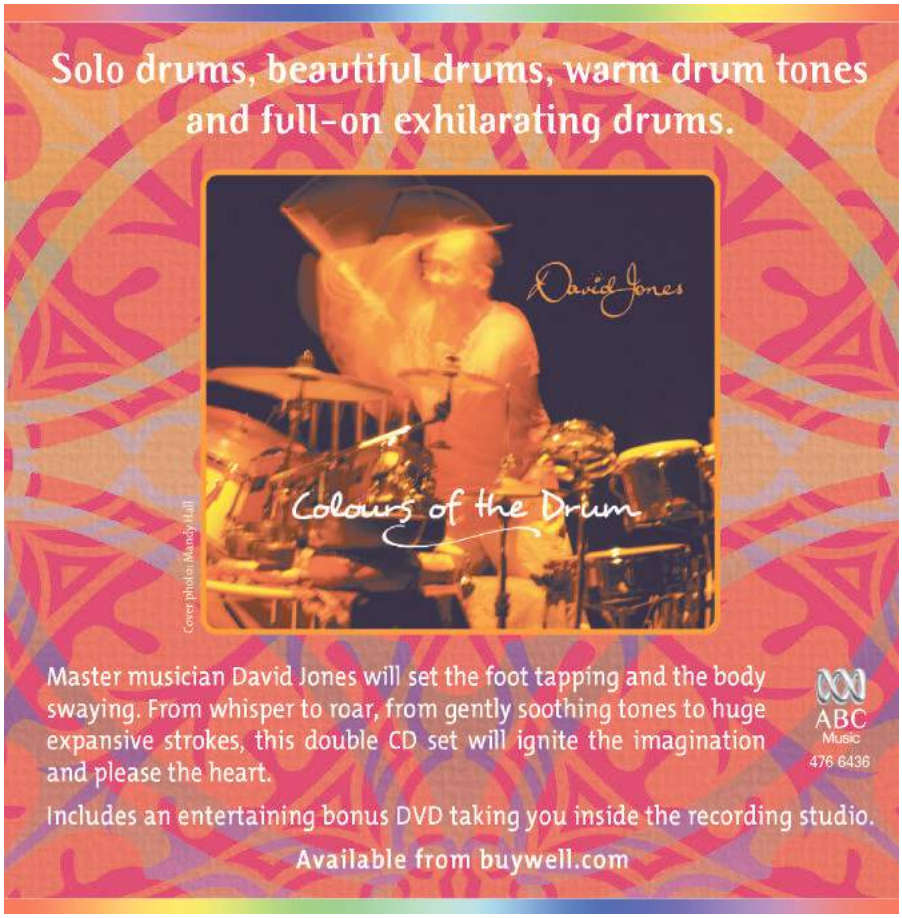
Donnie Marple took home top honors of the night. The West Virginia native was awarded several outstanding prizes, including a 2007 Toyota FJ Cruiser, a $2,500 Levi' s shopping spree in Los Angeles, a new custom-built drumset from Gretsch, cymbals printed with Marple' s signature, a one-year stick, cymbal, and head endorsement (he selected Pro-Mark, Zildjian, and Evans), a Roland T2 electronic drumkit and PM30, and $10,000 in cash. Marple will also be featured in a GC ad campaign.

The final act of the night, Angels & Airwaves, was by far the crowd favorite. Featuring heavy, consistent playing from drumming great Atom Willard—who has judged the competition in the past—the foursome brought the house down with their epic compositions and engaging stage presence, even if Willard was feeling a little added heat from being the spotlighted instrumentalist of the night.

" It' s cool," he says. " Yes, there' s a certain amount of pressure. Whether it' s self-imposed or actual, I don' t know. But you do feel like, Wow, there are a lot of really good drummers in the building tonight. They' re everywhere."

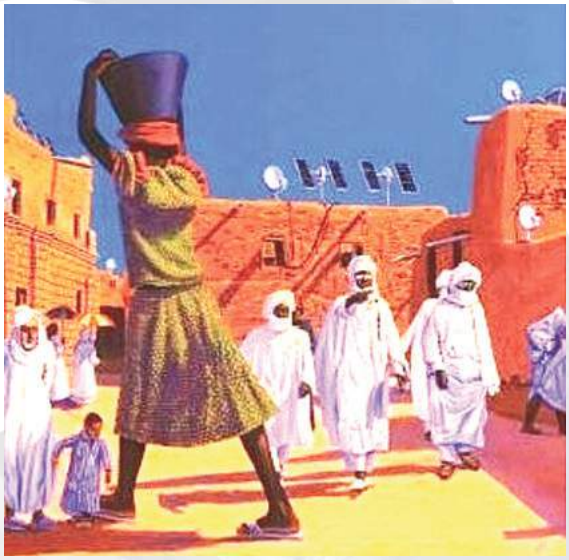
Despite his forceful approach, Willard melded nicely with the delicateness of the material, performing with an air of maturity that translated well into the room. His dynamics were spot-on, and his transitions to side snare rudiments were clean and appropriate. Angels & Airwaves gave the audience an explosive ending to another exciting Drum Off Grand Finals event.

" I think it' s a really neat thing," Willard says. " Guitar Center has done a lot to promote these guys. Even if you don' t win, it' s a great opportunity to travel and get to play in front of a lot of people. Just playing in such a high-pressure situation makes it a really good experience."



RECORDINGS

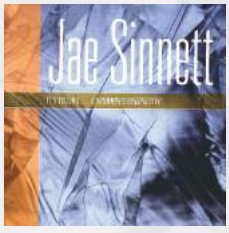
Ratings Scale
★★★★★ Classic
★★★★½ Excellent
★★★½☆ Good
★★½☆☆ Fair
★½☆☆☆ Poor



THE MARS VOLTA THE BEDLAM IN GOLIATH

★★★★½

Change is natural with heavy rock radicals Mars Volta. So their metal-funk-prog tangents are best listened to with one ear tuned in to the pocket, and the other on alert for that inevitable acid-calypso vamp. The constant change isn't limited to the arrangements: Current drummer **THOMAS PRIDGEN** is the band's third in six years. Like predecessors Jon Theodore and Blake Fleming, Pridgen is a thunder ball who works the kit like The Who's John Entwhistle played bass—holding a peculiarly punctuated song together while seemingly soloing throughout. Pridgen's approach is explosive, whether blazing a vapor trail through "Aberinkula" with rapid-fire snare rolls or bashing artfully during the instrumental passages of "Goliath." But Pridgen can tether those histrionics on a dime, proving he's always prepared for that jarring change that's coming any measure now. (Universal) **Patrick Berkery**



JAE SINNETT IT'S TELLING...A DRUMMER'S PERSPECTIVE

★★★½☆

Virginia jazz drummer **JAE SINNETT** has been putting out records with some highly touted sidemen for nearly twenty years. *It's Telling…* showcases eight diverse Sinnett originals, putting the emphasis on modern group interplay, odd times, and the exuberant, fearless playing of the leader. The hi-hats are wide open during the 5/4 churn of "Locus," and Sinnett throws in (or is it "takes out"?) some *long* tension-filled and beat-displaced spaces. Elsewhere, the drummer's slick flams and burning singles on the title track's solo are in welcome contrast to the lightly swinging brushes and excellent kick/snare combos that drive "Simple Pleasures." (www.jaesinnett.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

THE JACK & JIM SHOW PRESENTS HEARING IS BELIEVING

★★★½☆

JOHN LARSEN STRANGE NEWS FROM MARS

★★★★☆

Original Mothers Of Invention drummer **JIMMY CARL BLACK** does double duty on these two disparately different releases. Joining fellow left-of-centrists **Eugene Chadbourne** and **Pat Thomas**, Black brings his lanky drumming (and quizzical vocals)—equal parts avant-garde tumbledown and rock 'n' roll simplicity—to *Hearing Is Believing* (Boxholder), an exercise in freeform folk tunes. Black swings, he rocks, he drubs the set (and rattles the sticks) as only he can. Black also narrates Frank Zappa tribute *Strange News From Mars* (Zonic), a ridiculously successful complicated-technique outing from Django Reinhardt aficionado Larsen and mighty Norwegian drummer **HÅKON MJÅSET JOHANSEN**. **Ken Micallef**

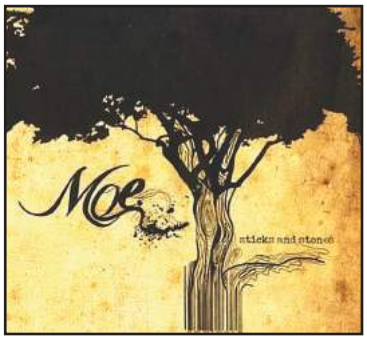
THE AFROMOTIVE SCARE TACTICS

★★★★☆

CHICAGO AFROBEAT PROJECT A MOVE TO SILENT UNREST

★★★★½

Fela Kuti's gone, but Afrobeat lives on! The Afromotive and Chicago Afrobeat Project both offer exciting takes on the style, moving it forward with integrity. On The Afromotive's *Scare Tactics* (Harmonized), **CURTIS WINGFIELD**'s drumset interlocks with the rhythmic phrases of the horns for a kaleidoscopic effect, his style punctuating polyrhythmic beats at every turn. Meanwhile, the mood of a hot, urban summer day is captured on Chicago Afrobeat Project's *A Move To Silent Unrest* (CAbP). On "Superstar Pt.7" **MARSHALL GREENHOUSE**'s powerful yet relaxed groove moves things along, bursting forth to spice things up. Take your pick, these Afrobeat bands are both hip—and there's a goldmine of tricky grooves here that are more difficult than they sound. **Martin Patmos**



MOE. STICKS AND STONES

★★★½☆

There's nary an extended jam on Buffalo-born moe.'s new studio album, *Sticks And Stones*. Fine, because what remains are ten lean and concise almost-country rockers that owe more to *Sticky Fingers* than a '72 "Dark Star." Drummer **VINNIE AMICO** and percussionist **JOHN LOUGHLIN** play it straight and grooving—on both the quarter-note ride part of the title track's Arena-Rawk 101 chorus, and on the unison lines of Zappa-esque instrumental "ZOZ." Amico's soft ghosting and reserved support behind sweet vocal harmonies, acoustic guitars, and violins shows a mature drummer at work in a controlled environment. Younger jam bands take note. (Fatboy) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

SOFT MACHINE LEGACY STEAM

★★★☆☆

Like most British prog/art-rock groups founded in the 1960s, Soft Machine has undergone many a lineup change. Soft Machine Legacy, made up of three one-time members, offers *Steam*, a new-millennium slice of psychedelic improv sure to please curmudgeonly fickle old-timers who grew up with the band. It might even grab some young ears along the way. Drummer **JOHN MARSHALL** (who played in the band in the '70s) navigates most of the proceedings with a decidedly English, super-loose and jazzy feel, but isn't afraid to throw in some muscular toms ("The Big Man") or syncopated funk ("In The Back Room"). (www.moonjune.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

BIPPP: FRECH SYNTH WAVE 1979/85

★★½☆☆

If you're the type of drummer who's horrified by the ultra-plastic drum sounds of OMD, A Flock Of Seagulls, and other iconic new wave bands, you might want to steer clear of this collection. Those who don't suffer from an allergic reaction to all things '80s, however, will find some intriguing sonic approaches on *BIPPP*. Now, I can't tell you for sure whether the cuts here indeed represent primo French new wave. (We've got a call in to the guys in Air to get to the bottom of that.) But I *can* report that the tweaked-out drum machine on Visible's "Le Jour Se Lève," the hard-panned "cheapo" blips and boops of Vitor Hublot's "Aller Simple," and the overdubbed "splish" backbeats on Vox Dei's "Terroriste" are simply…fun. And that's an aspect of recording that most drumming "purists" seem to pay precious little attention to. (Everloving) **Adam Budofsky**

BLACK MOUNTAIN IN THE FUTURE

★★★½☆

For each thunderstorm-heavy riff, there's a passage of creepy quiet; after each stomper, we get a breather. *In The Future*, Black Mountain's second LP, is actually paced like an…uh…album, that pre-iTunes relic. Of course, the songs—featuring such favorite prog-rock subjects as witches, demons, and black magic—sound pretty good in shuffle mode too. **JOSHUA WELLS** meets the dramatic material with a clear thump of an attack and a huge, lush sound, which he scales back on occasion when a lighter touch is appropriate. While Black Mountain invokes '60s/'70s rockers like Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd, and Jethro Tull, Wells' sloshing hi-hats and low-toned snare recall another classic: Queen's Roger Taylor. (Jagjaguwar) **Michael Parillo**

NYNDK NORDIC DISRUPTION

★★★☆☆

No, NYNDK isn't a hip new designer label, but this fine jazz quintet does strut out some high style. The moniker refers to a cross-the-pond coalition of formidable talents from New York (NY), Norway (N), and Denmark (DK). Guest drummer **SCOTT NEUMANN,** (a NY guy) is a wise choice for this breed of hard-swinging, not-so-straight-ahead that's grounded in mainstream yet peppered with subtle curveballs. Keeping a constant propulsive edge, Neumann floats and snaps at the quirky interplay like a happy dog leaping at Frisbees. Exciting and hungry-edged, but never "out." NYNDK R OK with me. (Jazzheads) **Jeff Potter**

And Furthermore...

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM LIVE AT THE BASS PERFORMANCE HALL (DVD/CD)

Lindsey Buckingham faced a challenge in presenting his CD *Under The Skin*'s minimalist approach live. Much of that responsibility fell to percussionist **TAKU HIRANO**, manning a "kit" of electronic pads, cymbals, and a cajon. Hirano's work on the Fleetwood Mac warhorses sounds somewhat canned. But his subtle touches on tracks like "Show You How"—working cajon, cymbals, and percussion triggers—shows excellent taste and coordination. (Reprise) **Patrick Berkery**

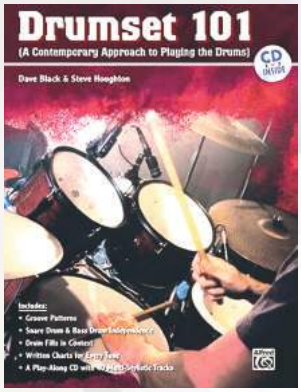
VICTOR WOOTEN PALMYSTERY

Drummer **DERICO WATSON** and bassist extraordinaire Victor Wooten are a truly mind-blowing tandem on *Palmystery*, a new disc from the long-time Flecktone. Watson supports Wooten's virtuosity with his own incredibly funky and swinging beats, and rips over-the-top fusion solos with grace. **J.D BLAIR**, **DENNIS CHAMBERS**, and **WILL KENNEDY** also contribute. (www.headsup.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

STEPHEN MALKMUS & JICKS REAL EMOTIONAL TRASH

Stephen Malkmus & Jicks have found the sweet spot between the former Pavement leader's tattered pop roots and his desire to peddle jammy guitar explorations that appeal to Television and Blue Öyster Cult fans alike. Ex Sleater-Kinney drummer **JANET WEISS**'s role cannot be underestimated. Her sludgy, steady grooves keep the jams good and lysergic sounding, while her tasteful accents and buoyant shuffles add crispness to the melodic stuff. (Matador) **Patrick Berkery**

MULTI-MEDIA



DRUMSET 101
BY DAVE BLACK & STEVE HOUGHTON

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER $15.95

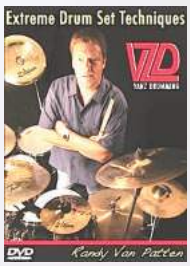
★★★★½

There are a *lot* of beginner drumset books out there, but don't miss Dave Black and Steve Houghton's *Drumset 101*. Everything a new drummer would need to know is found within these clearly written forty-eight pages. The accompanying CD is extremely easy to play along with, and includes some full band tracks to jam with. Beginning with a review of music notation and playing techniques, *Drumset 101* gradually gets the new drummer to play full-on rock beats and much more. From classic bossa nova and swing beats to shuffles and basic fills, each lesson even includes an explanation of what the drummer is to expect before they dig in. (Alfred) **Fran Azzarto**

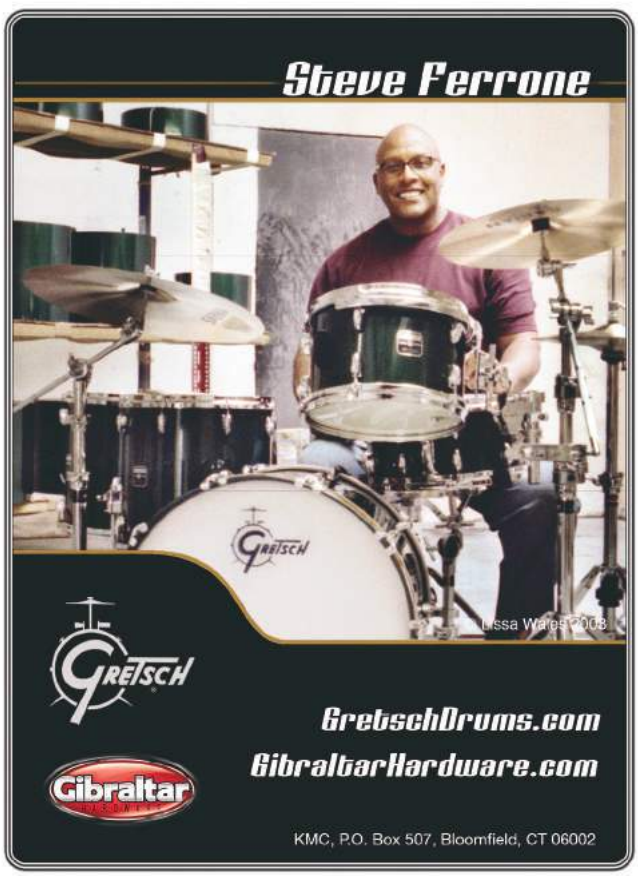
EXTREME DRUM SET TECHNIQUES
BY RANDY VAN PATTEN

DVD LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE $24.95

★★★½☆



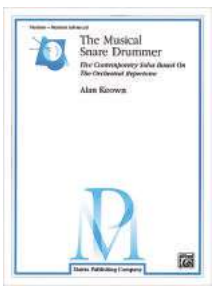
Drummer Randy Van Patten is entertaining and educational on this well structured, self-produced instructional DVD. Van Patten moves quickly through basic stick grip, hand technique, and rudiments. His focus is on developing single- and double-stroke combinations (mainly paradiddles and triplets) around the kit to create single and double bass grooves, fills, and solos based on these rudimental patterns. Van Patten's ideas are by no means "extreme" compared to the advanced techniques of today's drumming monsters. And unfortunately, there's no written supplemental support or online downloadable charts included. But Van Patten's basic concepts are a fun and practical starting point for beginners and intermediate players to build a strong drumming vocabulary. (www.vanzdrumming.com) **Mike Haid**



THE MUSICAL SNARE DRUMMER: FIVE CONTEMPORARY SOLOS BASED ON THE ORCHESTRAL REPERTOIRE
BY ALAN KEOWN

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED $12.95

★★★★½

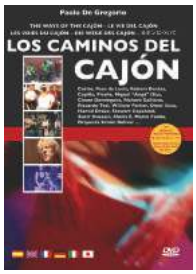


Pacific Northwest percussionist, teacher, and clinician Alan Keown's book *The Musical Snare Drummer* assembles five solos based on material from Schumann's *Third Symphony*, Bartok's *Concerto For Orchestra*, Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kije Suite*, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol* and *Scheherazade*. This is no-nonsense "black page" stuff for advanced drummers who have their full rudiments, grace notes, 32nd-note triplets, and attention to dynamics together. Keown's instructions include using alternate stickings, paying mind to tempo markings, and being expressive during cadenzas. The solos could be great for drum corps warm-ups or a rather difficult refresher for those looking to brush up on their reading. (Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

LOS CAMINOS DEL CAJÓN

DVD LEVEL: ALL 80 EUROS

★★★★½



Los Caminos Del Cajón (The Ways Of The Cajón) is a dynamic film about the roots and diversity of the Afro-Peruvian "box." The opening sequence takes you into the workshop of the film's director, Paolo de Gregorio, as a new cajón is being sanded to perfection. This instrument has been around since the late nineteenth century in Peru, and has been popular in Spain and Cuba as well. Among other historical anecdotes, the DVD details how Peruvian percussionist Calto Soto introduced the cajón to world-renowned Spanish flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia in the late 1970s, and how it's been his drum of choice ever since. There are many exciting performances of drumming and dancing throughout the film, featuring one virtuoso player after another, as well as interviews with the likes of **ZAKIR HUSSAIN** and **STEWART COPELAND**. This is truly a celebration of the cajón. (www.cajonDG.com) **David Licht**

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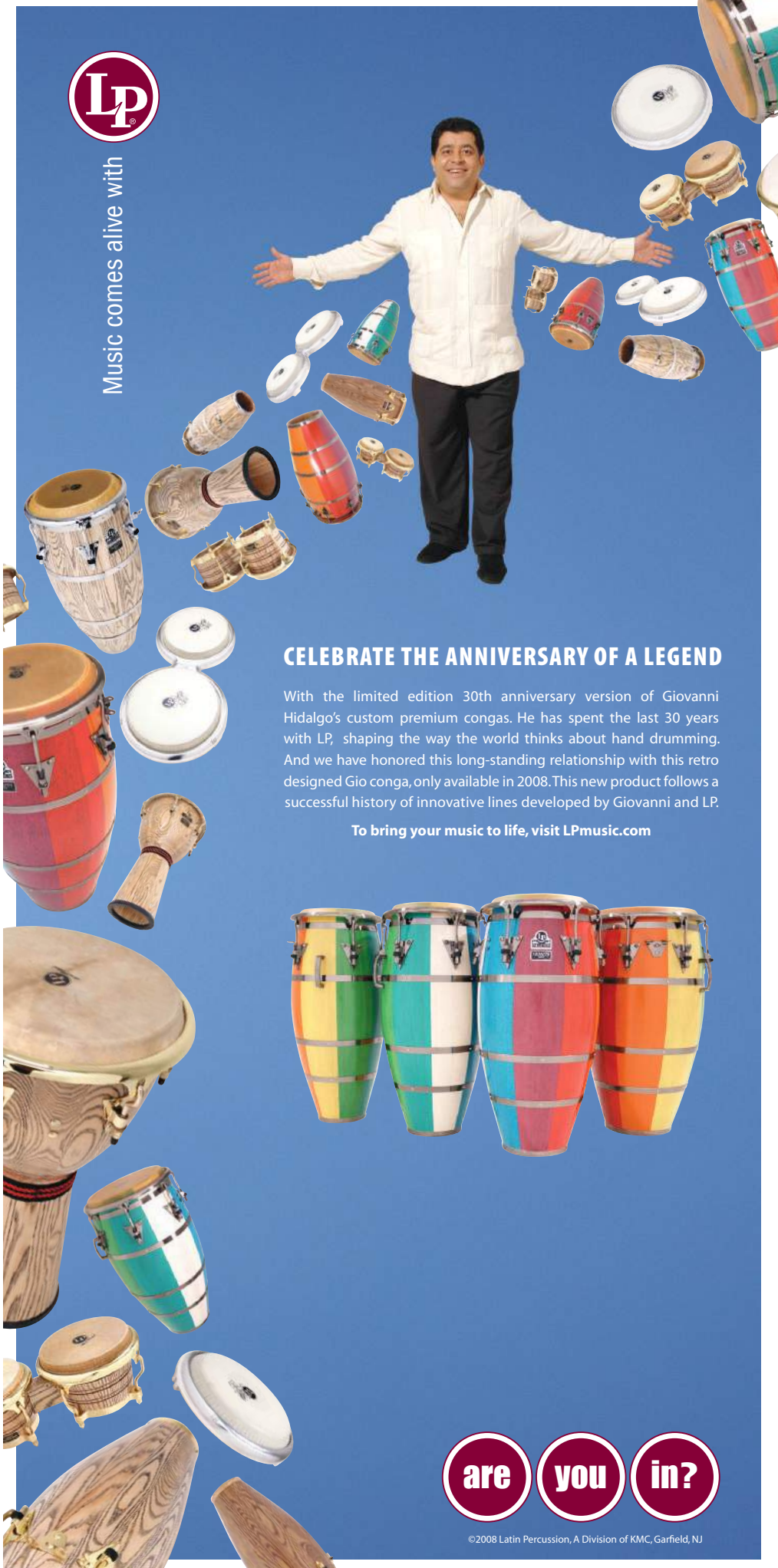

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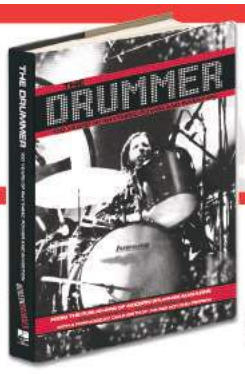
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In Memoriam
Buddy Miles

Rock/R&B drummer and singer/songwriter Buddy Miles died of congestive heart failure at his home in Austin, Texas this past February 28. He was sixty years old.

Although he's best remembered for his stint with Jimi Hendrix's Band Of Gypsys, Miles also had a successful career playing with many top R&B artists, as well as his own solo projects. Some of his earliest gigs included R&B acts Ruby And The Romantics and The Delfonics.

While playing with Stax superstar Wilson Pickett in 1967, Miles was invited by guitarist Mike Bloomfield to join blues/rock/soul group Electric Flag. The drummer played on three of the band's albums (Trip, An American Music Band, and Long Time Comin') before forming his own group, The Buddy Miles Express, in 1968.

Soon after creating his own band, Buddy began his legendary collaboration with Hendrix. As a member of the guitarist's Band Of Gypsys, Miles appeared on their classic self-titled album, which was recorded on New Years' Eve in 1969.

Post Hendrix, Miles went on to work with other legendary guitarists, including Carlos Santana, John McLaughlin, and Muddy Waters. Miles was also the lead voice on the popular California Raisins commercials in the mid-1980s.

A more in-depth look at Buddy Miles' career will appear in next month's issue.

Chad Smith

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For more information, go to www.drummernight.co.uk, www.londoninternationalmusicshow.com, or www.remo.com.

Mark Schulman

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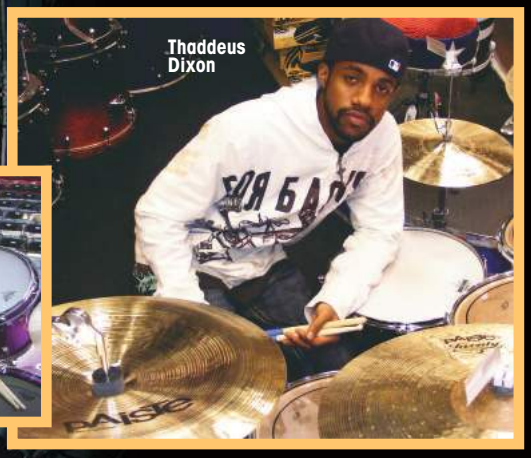

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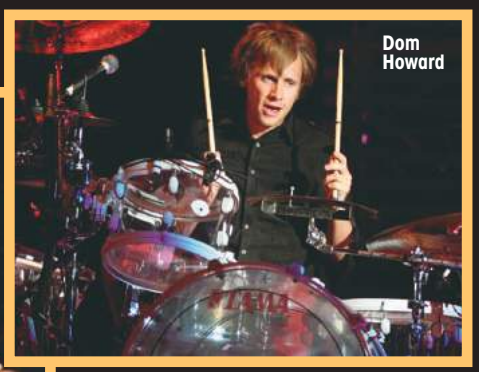
More Who' s Playing What

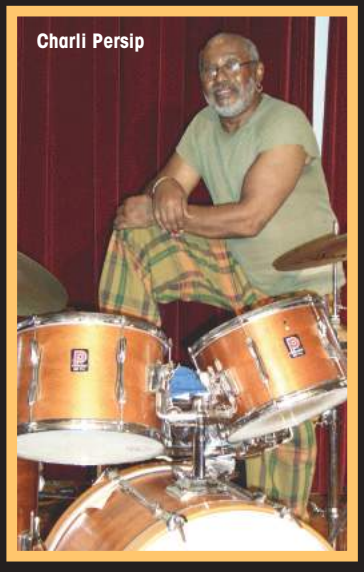
Pro-Mark has added **Jason Bohham** (Led Zeppelin/Foreigner), **Chris Corsano** (Bjork), **Dom Howard** (Muse), **Garrett Goodwin** (Carrie Underwood), **Arthur Latin II** (Harry Connick, Jr.), **Steve Clifford** (Circa Survive), **Aquiles Priester** (Hangar), and the **Blue Devils Drum & Bugle Corp**. to their artist roster.

Jazz legend **Charli Persip** has joined the Vater artist family.

Walfredo Reyes, Sr., DrumJungle percussionists **Daniel de los Reyes**, **Raul Pineda**, **Luisito Quintero**, **Roberto Quintero**, and **Sandy Perez** are endorsing Gon Bops percussion.


Dom Howard

Jason Bonham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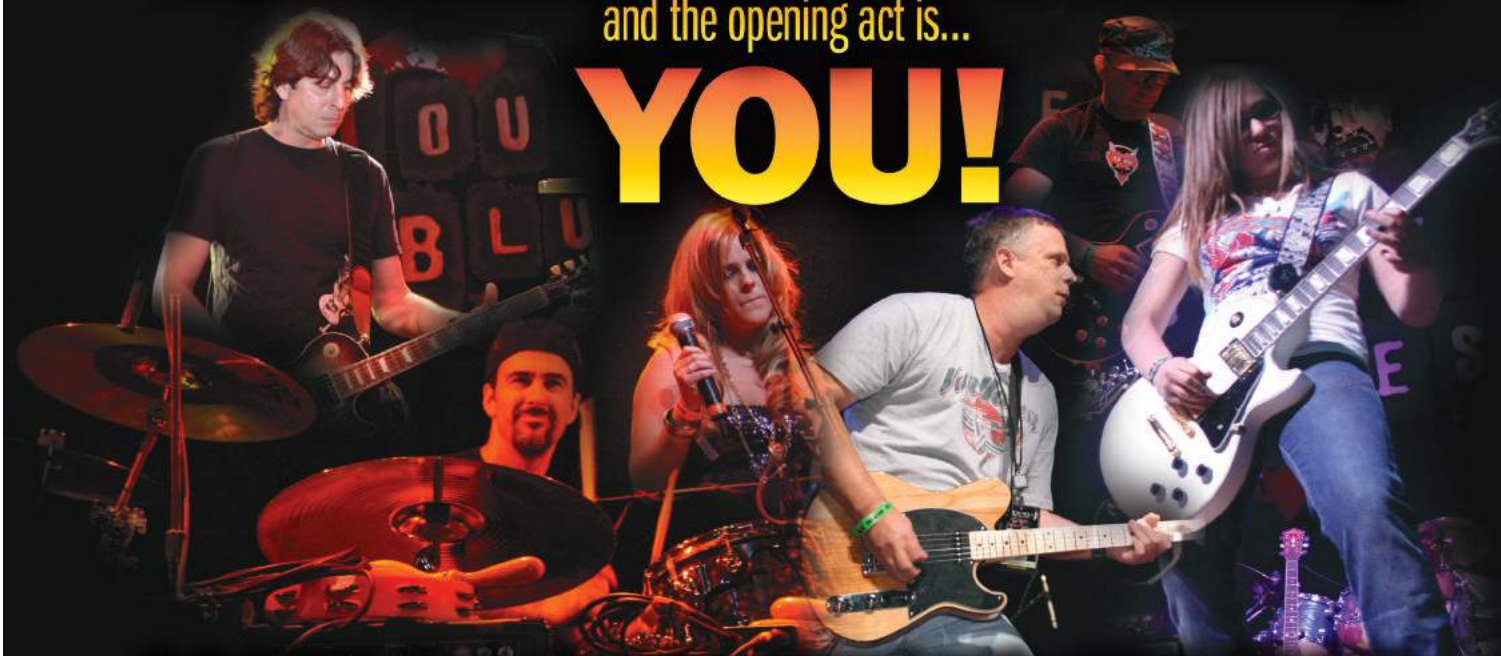

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The Belly Dance Kit

Las Vegas drummer Tom Mears keeps busy performing original solo drumming compositions with belly dancers in Nevada, California, and Utah. Tom plays a Sonor Designer Series Vintage Maple Light kit with a tattoo finish. All thirteen cymbals and seven cup chimes are from Sabian' s Terry Bozzio Radia Series, including a 24" Radia ride cymbal.

Tom uses six bass drum pedals. Two DW 5000 and two DW 4000 pedals allow him to access a tambourine, a cowbell, and two PD8 Roland pads. The other two pedals are Sonor Giant Step Twin Effect models, one of which is used on the bass drum and the other on a Jam Block.

Included on the kit are a PDP 10" auxiliary snare, TreeWorks chimes, Meinl cowbells, Rhythm Tech bongos and drumset tambourines, LP and Meinl blocks, three Roland PD8 pads, a Roland TD-6V sound module, and assorted hardware. The artwork on the bass drum head was created by Las Vegas performing artist Jada Fire. More information is available at Tom' s Web site, www.divinebellydancedrums.com.

Is Your Drumkit Something Special?

Of course it is! Now how about sharing your cool creation with thousands of fellow *Modern Drummer* readers. Simply send us some photos and a brief description of your unique set, and we'll consider it for inclusion in *Kit Of The Month.* And if we do pick your pride & joy for coverage in *MD,* we'll send you a cool new MD Drum Bag/Cooler—for free! Just follow the simple directions below.

Photo Submission: Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Hi-res digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to miked@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.

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